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THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

MEMOIRS AND LETTERS

LADY GEORGINA FITZGERALD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HER SON, LORD FITZGERALD
AND A HISTORY OF HER LIFE BY HER DAUGHTER, LADY FITZGERALD

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON

JOHN AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

STATIONERS' COURT, LONDON.

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1845.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

THE COUNTESS DE BONNEVAL:

HER LIFE AND LETTERS.

BY

LADY GEORGINA FULLERTON.

“On veut des romans, que ne regarde-t-on de près à l'histoire?”

M. GUIZOT, *Revue des Deux-Mondes*.

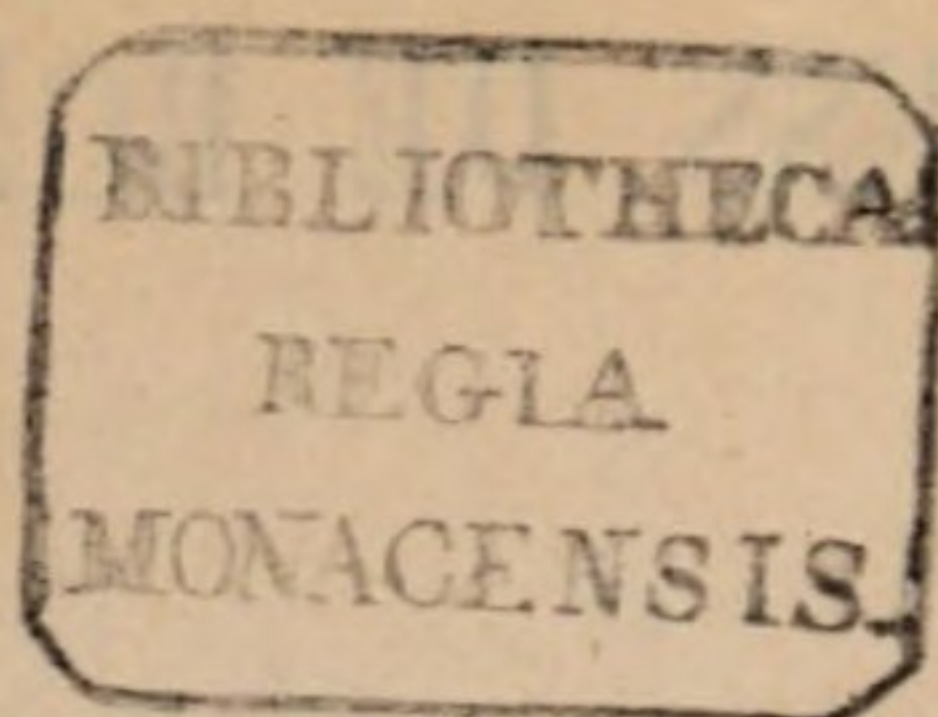
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
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1858.

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15, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET,

1858.

Printed by R. BORN, Gloucester Street, Park Street, Camden Town.

THE COUNTESS DE BONNEVAL.

First Chapter.

"Men give to dust that is a little gilt
More laud than they will give to gold o'erduced."

SHAKESPEARE.

"He lives, not yet is past his manhood's prime,
Though seared by toil, and something touched by time
His faults, whate'er they were, if scarce forgot,
Might be untaught him by his varied lot."

BYRON.

"Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign,
Yet gently prest, press gently mine.
Such feebleness of limbs thou provest
That now at every step thou movest
Upheld by two, yet still thou lovest."

COWPER.

A FEW days later Judithe was sitting
in her mother's drawing-room, apparently
listening to the conversation of a circle

of evening visitors, but more occupied the while in watching the door through which the guests were introduced, or straining her ears to detect the sound of a carriage in the court below.

M. de Bonneval had been absent for nearly a week, and the time had seemed very long to her impatience. Each time that a bell on the staircase gave notice of the arrival of a fresh visitor her heart beat with the hope of seeing him appear, and when some other person was announced, she breathed a little inaudible sigh.

Mesdames de Seignelay, de Courcillon, and de Soubise, Messieurs de Guiche, de Brancas, de Gêvres, and d'Aumont were successively ushered in, and a few moments afterwards M. de Bonrepos arrived. She was not sorry that he came and seated himself by her side.

There are moments in life when the

society of a real and very old friend has power to soothe us. When we feel oppressed by some secret sorrow that we would not for worlds betray, or perhaps even acknowledge to ourselves, though our hearts may be aching at the time; there is something very refreshing in the presence of one who has always loved us; the sound of whose voice, and the kind playfulness of whose words, remind us of the days of our childhood,—of past years of peace and joy. Judithe was glad to escape from taking share in the animated conversation that was going on around her mother's sofa to a *tête-à-tête* with M. de Bonrepos, who had no eyes and no ears but for her. He tried, as usual, to entertain her with a variety of anecdotes, but finding her somewhat absent, he pulled out of his pocket a miniature-portrait of her sister, Madame de Bonac, and called her attention to its exquisite finish.

“My sister is very pretty,” Judithe observed, with a deep sigh that had certainly no relation to the remark she had made.

“Very, on canvass or ivory,” replied M. de Bonrepos, who was no great admirer of the young ambassadress. “There are persons whose pictures are invariably an improvement on themselves, others who only lose by the experiment. I advise you, for instance, never to sit for your picture.”

“Why not?” inquired Judithe, with a smile.

“Why, in the first instance, the painter would give you fine but not charming eyes. A complexion of lilies and roses instead—”

“Instead of my own, which is of the colour of the Spanish jessamine,” she laughingly interrupted.

“No, indeed, Mademoiselle Judithe; I was going to say of a delicate eglantine, just tinged with a faint flush. And then they would paint you with coral lips, as they call them, and not with that rose-bud of a mouth in which I used years ago to count the little white teeth, when you were sitting on my knees, and playing with my ruffles. Ah! Mademoiselle de Gontaut! It is hard work to get out of the habit of loving you!”

“And why should you lose so excellent a habit, M. de Bonrepos?”

“What, adding insult to injury, by pretending to ignore my wrongs? You are a faithless, cruel, inconstant fair one, but time will work a change in your feelings, ‘sooner or later,’ as Racine has it, ‘you will give me back a heart that should be mine.’ What, do you frown upon my poetic reproaches? Do you

grudge the moments that you bestow upon me?"

At that moment the door was thrown open, and the Duc de St. Simon came in. Judithe whispered to M. de Bonrepos:

"That is a man that I cannot endure."

"Indeed! you would then have been charmed with a lampoon that was handed about yesterday all over the town."

"What did it say?"

"I cannot remember the lines, but it was to the effect that M. de St. Simon, in his spite, attacks the whole nobility, and would do well to stay at home, and look into his own genealogy. Did not the verses run thus, M. de Brancas?"

This question was addressed to a young man who was standing at a short distance, and seemed inclined to join in the conversation.

"You know," he answered, "who composed that squib?"

“No, indeed, I do not. Favour us, if you please, with the name of the author.”

“Bonneval, to be sure, last night at a supper at Riom’s. He was in high force, and in the humour for rhymes, if *not* for reason. He made a number of verses on all the great people, and did not spare the ladies either, the then present company of course excepted. Madame de Nesle and Madame de Montbazon were nearly dying of laughter. He invented a sort of court-calendar, which immediately became the rage. It was printed at a moment’s notice, and to-day people are fighting for the copies. There is nobody so amusing as Bonneval. Young Arouet, that wicked little skeleton, as Madame la Duchesse de Berry calls him, protests that the devil himself is not half so c’ever.”

“He was then in Paris yesterday, and never came near me,” Judithe inwardly ejaculated, and the sound of a smothered

sigh reached M. de Bonrepos' ear. He rose abruptly and walked away, murmuring between his teeth:

“That angel's heart, that madonna-like face! If this is not casting pearls before swine I do not know what the text means.”

He was so absorbed by his thoughts that he did not immediately perceive that M. de St. Simon was standing near him, and endeavouring to catch his eye. When he did so, he suffered himself to be led away into a corner, and plied with questions by the noble duke. Amongst other topics of conversation Mademoiselle de Gontaut's approaching marriage was discussed between them, and M. de Bonrepos inquired of his friend if he had seen the bridegroom.

“Biron brought him to my house a few days ago,” was the reply. “I never saw, in my life, a man more at his ease.”¹

¹ From *St. Simon's Memoirs*.

At that instant the person they were speaking of made his appearance in the *salon*, where he had been so much talked of that evening, and, in one instance, at least, so anxiously expected. His manner certainly served to corroborate M. de St. Simon's last assertion. No one could be more gracefully at his ease than he appeared to be, more perfectly self-possessed, and even those who felt most prejudiced against him were forced to admit that his manners were those of a perfect grand seigneur. After paying his compliments to the Marquise de Biron, and exchanging a few words with various persons of his acquaintance, he went up to Judithe, and seated himself by her side.

The look of beaming happiness which illuminated her face at that moment put the finishing stroke to M. de Bonrepos' ill-humour. He abruptly turned his back upon them, and took his departure.

There was something in M. de Bonneval's countenance, voice, and perhaps in a kind of surface-sensibility, if the term be admissable, that supplied the place of the qualities he was deficient in, and of the feelings he did not possess. Judithe was perfectly conscious that he did not as yet regard her with any peculiar affection or admiration, that he,

“The very glance of whose clear eye
Threw round a light of glee,”

was as ready to turn that radiant glance on others as on herself; each time that she communed with her own mind, after spending a few moments with him, an inward voice whispered that he did not, that perhaps he never would, love her. But in his presence she forgot all her misgivings; she could think of nothing but him, so fascinating was his manner, so irresistibly agreeable his conversation. He knew so well how to

respond to the expression of feeling in others, to speak the language of enthusiasm, and even that of virtue.¹ Then at other times his playful fancy threw such a charm over the lightest and most trifling subjects. He related with such exquisite humour the most amusing anecdotes! The short moments she spent in his society were sufficient to banish from her mind the anxieties and despondency that were beginning to weigh upon her at other times, and especially during his frequent absences from Paris.

On this particular evening she had a petition to present to him, which for some time past she had been revolving in her

¹ Witness the following sentence extracted from his correspondence :

“I own but three masters: God, honour, and my sovereign, and to the last I acknowledge no allegiance inconsistent with my duty to the two first.”

mind, and she felt half provoked with herself for the timidity that made her hesitate to speak to him on the subject. At last, summoning up her courage, she began in a voice which was meant to be firm :

“ I wonder, my cousin, if you remember a person who loved you dearly in your childhood, and who loves you now as dearly as ever? Madame Dupuis, your nurse? She has not long to live, and to see you once again would be the greatest of consolations to her.”

“ If I remember her ! ” exclaimed M. de Bonneval. “ Good Heavens ! Is she still alive, that excellent Madame Dupuis ? I am a perfect monster not to have inquired after her. Where does she live, the poor, dear woman ? ”

“ With us, my cousin. She has been in our family for the last twenty years. She came to us before I was born, and

the stories with which she amused me in my childhood were anecdotes of your infancy. She is now all but bed-ridden, and her greatest wish on earth is to see you again."

"Merciful Heavens! How I used to torment that good Madame Dupuis. I wonder I did not drive her mad. Why did you not tell me this sooner? I shall not let another day pass without calling upon her. Pray announce to her my visit."

"With all my heart," Judithe replied, and tears of joy stood in her eyes. She was very glad of the promise for her nurse's sake in the first place, and then also a little for herself. It was not often that she could reckon upon seeing him two days together, and it seemed to her an unusual happiness to hear him say, when he bade her good night:

"Then *to-morrow* you will expect me."

The following morning she rose early, and as soon as she was dressed went to inform Madame Dupuis of M. de Bonneval's intended visit. After breakfast she returned again to enjoy her emotion, to help her to put on her smartest gown, to arrange her little room in the most becoming manner.

The weather was fine; the soft spring air blowing in at the open window. She went down to the garden, and gathered a nosegay, which they placed on the chimney-piece between the two vases of artificial flowers which had stood there for many a long year. It felt to Judithe as if she was preparing for the first time to receive her cousin in a home of her own, for she spent so many hours in her nurse's room, soothing her sufferings and cheering her solitude, that it almost seemed as if that little apartment was her peculiar domain. When all was done she sat down with her embroidery at the open window, and

worked in silence, Madame Dupuis meanwhile scarcely taking her eyes off her face, and ever-and-anon wiping away the tears that chased each other down her cheeks. She was a little alarmed at the idea of seeing her foster-child, now grown into a great general. Judithe kept laughing at her nervousness, and yet her own heart beat fast whenever a carriage drove into the court.

At last *his* equipage appeared, and for the first time it occurred to her that perhaps she ought not to remain in her nurse's room during his visit. She moved hastily towards the door, but Madame Dupuis caught hold of her hand, and said in an imploring voice :

“Do not go, my dear child, I entreat you to stay with me.”

“M. de Bonneval came in, and never had she been so struck as on this occasion with the majesty of his figure and the

beauty of his countenance. He went straight up to the good old woman, knelt down by her arm-chair, and bringing his face close to hers affectionately embraced her.

“Oh, my good lord! Is it you, my dear child? monsieur le comte, I mean?” ejaculated the poor woman, quite bewildered with joy.

“Yes, indeed! my dear Madame Dupuis. Here I am, strange as it is. And, come now, let me have a look at your dear old face; let me see if it still wears that severe aspect which used to keep me in such order. I was very much afraid of you in those days, Madame Dupuis.”

Madame Dupuis could not but smile at this in the midst of her tears, and kissing his hands, she exclaimed:

“Ah! well, if you were afraid of me then, you have made plenty of people

afraid of you since, if report speaks truly. Oh, dear me! what joy it is to see you again, I shall certainly die of it."

"Oh, by no means, Madame Dupuis. I should never forgive you. Die, indeed! you look as if you would live these twenty years to come. I wonder now if you remember all those fine stories you used to tell me. You were quite a genius in that line. They ought to have been transmitted to posterity. Do you know that my cousin de Gontaut told me sad tales about you yesterday. She does not love you at all, I can assure you. You have such a quarrelsome disposition. It is only meek tempers like mine that can put up with it. Patience, you know, has always been my favourite virtue."

As he kept running on in this playful manner the old woman's eyes were fixed with rapture on the stately form and handsome face of her foster-son. Taking

Judithe's hand in hers, she said, with a sort of maternal exultation :

"I told you that he was beautiful."

Judithe smiled and blushed at the same time. The count laughed and said :

"Your sight is failing you, I fear, my good nurse. You look upon me now as you remember me some twenty years ago."

"And now you will never go away from us again?" she whispered, pressing at the same time the little hand she held in hers, and laying the other on the count's arm.

"Oh, as to that, my dear Madame Dupuis, you remember, I am sure, the words of my favourite song:¹

"Jouissons du présent,
L'avenir est aux fous."²

¹ "We will live for the present,
Leave the future to fools."

² Historical.

These words made a painful impression on Mademoiselle de Gontaut. It was as if a cold chill had struck upon her heart, so happy and so joyous a moment before.

Madame Dupuis sorrowfully observed :

“If you go away I shall never live to see you return. I really believe that the sound of your voice, and the sight of your face, would keep the life in me for some time yet.”

“In that case, my good nurse, I shall soon pay you another visit, and in the meantime here is my picture for you,” and as he spoke, he placed in her hands an admirable likeness of himself in miniature, set with brilliants.

With deep emotion she exclaimed :

“Oh ! monsieur le comte ! This is much too beautiful !”

“Why you just now assured me that

I was handsome in spite of my advanced age?"

"And so you are; but I mean all this gold. These diamonds!"

"Sell them if you like, and give the money to Charlot. By the way, where is he now, my foster-brother?"

"At Limoges. He has been married there these many years."

"The deuce! Charlot married! Then you are a grandmother, I suppose, Madame Dupuis?"

"Why, indeed, I am, but I have never seen the little fellow; and in truth it is you, monsieur le comte and Mademoiselle Judithe who seem really to me like my children."

Judithe bent down to kiss her nurse's forehead, and M. de Bonneval, who was standing by the chimney-piece, took a sprig of geranium out of the bouquet which she had that morning arranged, and passed it in his button-hole."

“Look here, Madame Dupuis. I am on my way to Sceaux. I shall wear your colours at the reception of Madame la Duchesse du Maine.”

“It was mademoiselle who gathered those flowers to make my room look gay for your visit.”

“I did not suspect it,” M. de Bonneval replied, bowing gracefully to the young girl, whose heightened colour he remarked, “but I am much indebted to the happy chance that has served me so well.”

When he had left the room where his presence had occasioned so much happiness, Judithe pushed her nurse's arm-chair to the window, that she might have the pleasure of seeing him get into his carriage, and, concealed behind the curtains, she herself watched his disappearance, and breathed a deep sigh as the sound of the wheels died away in the distance. She remained for a while deeply absorbed in thought. She

could not but perceive that her affection for M. de Bonneval was becoming every day more engrossing, while, at the same time, she felt by no means satisfied that his regard for her was increasing in the same proportion. She would have been still more uneasy at the vivacity of her own sentiments had they not so naturally grown out of her long-cherished partiality for her absent cousin; that they did not appear to her in the light of a newly-awakened passion, but blended almost unconsciously with her every thought and feeling.

A few days later he again visited Madame Dupuis, and this time he found her alone. An hour afterwards Judithe, with her arm round her nurse's neck, was playfully, but at the same time anxiously, seeking to extract from her details as to this second interview, which seemed to have left her somewhat thoughtful and pre-occupied.

“Well, dear heart,” she said, “has my cousin been very agreeable to-day? Did he embrace you as he did on Monday? Did he say what he has been about all this week? We have only seen him once for a few minutes. Do you remember that little Susan, at Biron, who, when we asked her if she often saw her sweetheart, answered: ‘Not by one half to my heart’s content.’ This is very much the case with me, I think. Now do tell me what you talked about?”

“Of many things, dear child; of you, for one,” the old woman said, with a smile that had in it a shade of sadness.

“And what does he say of me, nurse? That I am a little insignificant fright, not half good enough to be his wife? It is what I often think of myself, I know.”

“No, indeed; quite the contrary, I assure

you. He says that you are pretty and pleasing, and that you converse very agreeably."

"Did he, indeed, speak so kindly of me? What else did he say? Come, dear nurse, you must be quite open with me. It is very important for my future happiness that I should know as much as possible of his thoughts and feelings. I do not see my way clearly, and sometimes I cannot think without apprehension of the new position I am soon to occupy. I did not choose it for myself, though, God knows, and you too, dear nurse, that I was nothing loth to accept it; but I have misgivings that I do not please him; that he has, perhaps, taken a dislike to me."

"No, indeed, my dear child, you are entirely mistaken there," Madame Dupuis eagerly interrupted. "He does you full justice."

“Does me *justice*,” Judithe sorrowfully repeated; “that is but a cold sort of feeling.”

“Do not fear but that he will love you in time, my sweet darling,” continued Madame Dupuis; “but made-moiselle, my dear child, you must reflect that this brave gentleman, whom we love so dearly, has been spoiled all his life. That he has never known what it is to submit his will to that of God or of man. He has never followed any rule but his fancy, and marriage seems a galling yoke to men of this description. You will have to deal very gently with this good count. You must beware of making him feel the weight of a chain which he may chafe at at first. By degrees you will win him over to wear it with patience.”

“Patience and my good lord and master are two companions that do not seem very

likely to agree," Judithe answered, with an attempt at cheerfulness; and, after a pause, she added, "if it be complaints and reproaches that he fears, he need not be under any such apprehension. My aim will be to prove to him that there are women who can love and suffer in silence. I shall pray for strength to hide my tears, and never to cause him one instant of pain or annoyance."

Then, throwing herself into her nurse's arms, she gave way to a violent fit of weeping, and cried long and bitterly on that more than maternal bosom. This outpouring of her feelings brought relief to her pent-up heart. When she raised her head again a sweet smile was beaming on her face. She looked like a flower that a thunder-shower has bowed down, but which rises again refreshed and strengthened when the storm has passed away. It was no doubt extraordinary that a person like

Mademoiselle de Gontaut, with sincere religious principles, and endowed besides with a peculiarly strong moral sense, and an almost impassioned appreciation of goodness, should not have objected, nay, should have been so willing, to marry a man who was generally considered a libertine and a free-thinker. In the first place, she was probably to a great extent in ignorance on that subject. Her family, who had had the marriage in view ever since the time that she had returned to Paris, had taken care to give her as favourable an impression as was possible of M. de Bonneval's character and reputation. When, from other quarters, she heard less indulgent opinions regarding him, she (as had been her wont from childhood upwards,) laid them to the score of prejudice and injustice. She was perfectly aware that her intended husband was not a religious man, that he spoke on all subjects with levity, and that his wit

would exercise itself with a freedom not always consistent with strict propriety, but it never entered her mind to suppose that he was devoid of that faith which few persons at that time ventured as yet openly to renounce. She knew that it often exists in the soul, together with many errors and defects, which for a while seem to throw it into the shade. She had seen it work wonderful miracles, even in the midst of that perverse and corrupted society; such striking conversions! such heroic sacrifices! such generous recantations! Men and women, bred in luxury, nursed in pomp and pleasure, renouncing the world and all its attractions, spending their lives amidst the most austere practices of penance, and it was some of the most reckless of its children who had given these great examples to a degenerate age, not the respectable formalists, not the hypocritical pretenders to piety. There were

many of this last description amongst her acquaintances, many that kept, so to speak, on fair terms with religion, but who never sacrificed to its claims one iota of their interests, not to mention their vices. She was surrounded with examples of profligacy on the one hand, and of conventionalism on the other. Between the two extremes of open scandal and of hypocrisy, her natural love of truth inclined her to give the preference to the former, and she ascribed to the man she loved the merit of sincerity.

It is a common and dangerous error to confound the boldness of vice with the fearlessness of truth. Habit too, alas ! induces toleration of what would, under other circumstances, awaken a holy indignation. The absence of principle in others could not excite

in her that lively astonishment which it creates in the minds of those who have always lived in the healthy atmosphere of virtue and integrity. The judgment gets warped, even while the heart, through God's grace, may remain uncorrupted.

In the duties of religion she sought strength against the dangers, and consolation under the trials of the world, but she put aside all reflections on the conduct of those amongst whom she lived. She had learnt to consider the vices of society and the inconsistency of men as inevitable evils, but her own religious feelings were doubtless weakening also under the influence of an absorbing human attachment. Grace will not always struggle with such an obstacle. God withdraws Himself for a while from hearts that neglect Him, but the link, although loosened, is often not broken. He bides His time. His

voice is heard again when the fever of passion subsides, and the weary spirit finds a refuge in that love, which, though jealous in its claims, is merciful in its patience.

Second Chapter.

"Thou'lt find e'en here some mournful note that tells
How near such April joy to weeping dwells."

MOORE.

"Oh, do not look so bright and blest,
For still there comes a fear,
When brows like thine look happiest,
That grief is then most near."

MOORE.

"Extremity of grief will make men mad,
Mirth cannot move a soul in agony.
There are daggers in men's smiles!
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child."

SHAKESPEARE.

THE horse-chesnuts of the Tuilleries
were putting forth their rich spiral
blossoms; the lilacs of the Luxembourg
exhaling their sweet perfumes. Those

royal gardens were crowded with gaily-dressed persons; the air resounded with the voices of children, the busy hum of insects, and the songs of thousands of birds. The stir of active life, the joyful exhilaration of the early days of spring, were pervading the good city of Paris, and lending to its streets and its boulevards the appearance of a holiday. Brilliant also was the display of wedding-presents, of ornaments of various kinds, and of splendid dresses, which were spread out to view on the tables of one of the principal reception-rooms of the Hotel de Biron on the 1st of May, 1717.

Pearls and diamonds had been bestowed on the little Judithe; a magnificent *corbeille de marriage* and a rich *trousseau* provided for her, but as she noiselessly glided into the room, early that morning, her eyes did not rest on the Genoa velvets, the point-lace veil, or the Dresden china, or

even on the jewels which her mother had taken pains to display to advantage; she seemed intent only upon placing in a conspicuous spot the small trinket which she held in her hand.

M. de Bonneval had been spending some days at a friend's villa. He was getting heartily tired of Paris and its society. His visits to the Hotel de Biron had been of late both few and short. But Madame de Gontaut, who had met him the day before at the royal hunt, had taken occasion to describe to him the brilliant display of bridal presents which had made the old hotel of the Faubourg St. Germain almost as dazzling, she said, as the Duc d'Aumont's House of Gold.¹

¹ The Duc d'Aumont was famous for his reckless extravagance. During his father's life-time he hired a house, which he fitted up entirely with gold. His stables were wainscoated with oak, and ornamented with costly china.

She had obtained from him the promise that he would come there on the morrow. Judithe had repaid her sister-in-law for this successful negociation by an affectionate embrace, and she spent the intervening time in joyous anticipation of that much-desired visit, and in forming an innocently artful scheme for engaging M. de Bonneval in what she fancied would prove an interesting conversation. She was anxious to draw his attention to a subject that would induce him to speak of himself and his past life, as he had sometimes done when, for a few moments, she had had the good fortune to detain him by her side. When this had been the case it was happiness enough to her for whole days afterwards to dwell on the recollection of his expressive looks and his eloquent words. Her stratagem consisted in placing poor Lafond's vinaigrette between a fan painted by Vanloo

and a group of figures in biscuit de Sèvres, which were likely to attract his notice. She trusted that his curiosity would be at once excited by the sight of an object which had once been in his possession.

When the time for the reception of visitors arrived, she withdrew to a window, where several young girls, the companions of her childhood, gathered round her. She found it difficult to attend to the incessant flow of very small talk which issued from their lips, as they eagerly discussed the merits of each article of dress or ornament which met their eyes; and when the Comte de Bonneval had once entered the room, many an observation on the comparative value of pearls and diamonds, of Valenciennes and Brussels' lace escaped her notice. She watched him as he paid his compliments to the marquise, her mother, and then, under her guidance, proceeded to inspect the various objects to which

she directed his attention. He had stopped to examine a magnificent necklace, the Duc de Lauzun's present to his great-niece, and was expressing his admiration of the gift and of the giver's generosity, when his eye suddenly fixed itself on the vinaigrette which Judithe had so carefully contrived to place in his way. Hastily putting down the diamond necklace, he laid hold of the little trinket, and addressed some questions to Madame de Biron, which she seemed at a loss how to answer. His curiosity evidently brooked no delay, and with the exultation of a child, whose little scheme has succeeded, Judithe saw him advance towards her with the vinaigrette in his hand.

The young ladies who were standing round her drew aside at his approach, and made way for him.

"My cousin," he said, "do be so kind as to tell me who it was that

gave you this bauble. I am certain that it is the same which M. le Duc de Vendôme made me a present of more than twenty years ago. See! his initials are worked in enamel on the lid."

"It is, indeed, the same," Judithe answered with a smile, "and yet I may venture to assert that it is mine."

"Explain to me, I entreat you, how it chanced to come into your possession?"

"Do you happen to recollect, my cousin, a soldier of the name of Lafond, who served in your regiment during the Italian campaign? He lost both his legs at the Battle of the Lines of Turin?"

"Lafond? To be sure I do. He was as brave a fellow as ever lived. From Gascony, if I mistake not?"

"Exactly so; from the village of Biron. You were present when he underwent a

dreadful operation, and fainted away under the surgeon's hands."

"And when he revived from that swoon, I gave him this vinaigrette as a keepsake. I now remember it perfectly. Poor fellow, he was as honest as he was brave, and by way of being greatly attached to me too. Is he dead, or did he sell this trinket?"

"Oh, no, indeed," exclaimed Judithe; "he would not have bartered it away for all the gold in the world."

"Then how came he to part with it?" the count rejoined.

Somewhat embarrassed at the question, Judithe hesitatingly replied:

"He has peculiar ideas on some points. He could not bear to think that you were serving in the Austrian army; and then he was very fond of me, poor Lafond. We were great friends all last summer, at Biron; he knew that I had

taken a great fancy to this vinaigrette, and so he gave it me."

"In that case I suppose that I could not persuade you to make it over to me?" M. de Bonneval said, with one of his most winning smiles. "I attach a certain value to this bauble."

"So do I, my cousin, attach a *great* value to its possession," Judithe answered, with a deep blush.

Her cousin placed the vinaigrette within her hand, closed her slender fingers over it, and kissed them as he did so. It was his first caress. She felt it to her heart's core, and gently withdrawing her hand, she said in a voice which was tremulous from emotion:

"I am so happy to have something to give you, my cousin, which you would care to accept. Pray take this trinket and keep it for my sake. When Lafond gave it up to me, I could not help

fancying that the day might come when I should return it to you."

"Did you then think of me at that time?"

"I have always thought of you, my cousin," she answered, with perfect simplicity, but with such modesty and artless tenderness, that it would have been difficult for a man not to be flattered by such ingenuous and involuntary flattery. In that sunshiny hour, on that lovely spring day, in sight of the waving trees, the perfumed blossoms, the deep blue sky, by the side of the innocent girl, the rich treasures of whose heart were lying open to his gaze, M. de Bonneval for one moment forgot that it would ill answer his purpose to make that heart his own. Words fell from his lips which stirred to its very depth the soul of his young bride, words of tenderness such as she had never hoped to hear from that lion-hearted man.

A moment before, she had scarcely hoped to please, and now she could fancy herself beloved. That voice, so melodious and so sweet, but whose cold accents had so often given her pain, was now thrilling in her ears with new and strange power; those eyes, whose bright and careless gaze had passed her by with heedless indifference, were now rivetted upon hers with an expression which opened to her view bright visions of happiness.

It was a mistake M. de Bonneval had made. He soon repented of the error he had committed. He had himself placed obstacles in the way which he was determined to pursue. To crush a woman's hopes, perhaps to break her heart, is not an agreeable task, even to those whose selfishness has made them, to a certain degree, callous to the pain they occasion to others. Duties to perform, or sacrifices to make, were things unknown to the

Comte de Bonneval, but at the same time he never wantonly inflicted suffering upon any one, but when to refrain from doing so would have entailed some privation on himself, and now, in an unguarded hour, he had awakened feelings, and given birth to hopes, which could only be destroyed through the blighting influence of prolonged disappointments and bitter sorrow. Alas! for those who repent of their good impulses!

On the following day Judithe found a letter on her table, which set her heart beating as if the very sight of her cousin's handwriting was an event in itself. She tore open the cover, within it were enclosed a bank-note, and a few lines from M. de Bonneval:

“May I hope, my cousin, that you will kindly undertake to transmit to your friend Lafond a mark of esteem from his former

colonel, which may tend to reconcile him to the uniform I now wear. He is one of the bravest fellows I ever met with, and I set a value on his good opinion. Tell him that I have always acted with the frankness of a soldier who fears nothing, not even his sovereign, where his honour is in question. Where mine is concerned I never have, and never will be, subservient to any potentate upon earth. As I once acted, so would I act again, under the same circumstances. My principle is to pursue a straightforward course, without stopping to weigh the consequences. This mode of conduct has always answered to me perfectly, and I do not intend to change it.”¹

Judithe pondered for a while on these high-sounding words, so well adapted to

¹ Almost all this letter is an extract from the Comte de Bonneval's correspondence.

mislead a mind which, although naturally clear-sighted, was strangely warped by her affection for the writer. She saw that M. de Bonneval, keenly susceptible as he was on the subject of *honour*, that much perverted word, had been wounded at the view which his old comrade-in-arms had taken of his conduct. She blushed deeply at the recollection of having been obliged, however slightly, to allude to Lafond's prejudices on the subject. She sympathised with his annoyance, and admired his generosity. To pay a tribute of praise and send a token of regard to one who had judged him unfairly was, in her eyes, one of those traits which mark a man's character, and it served to raise to the highest pitch her enthusiasm for her betrothed husband.

As she sat down to write to Lafond a letter, which was to enclose M. de Bonneval's gift, she felt a certain misgiving as

to the manner in which the communication would be received. She kept working herself up to believe in the impossibility that a man in his position of life, and by no means well-educated, should persist in condemning the conduct of a person whom both the Court and the capital of France had absolved from blame, and welcomed with acclamation. He must be touched, she thought, by the kindness of his once beloved colonel; he must be grateful for his honourable mention of him; and so Judithe despatched an epistle as elaborately composed, as delicately penned, as any she had ever addressed to her most fastidious friends,—even to M. de Bonrepos in return for one of his best sonnets, or to Madame de Lambert to return thanks for an invitation to one of her literary parties. She embodied in it the spirit of M. de Bonneval's somewhat grandiloquent self-defence, and tempered it with the grace

which the women of that day knew how to impart to everything they wrote. She sent this letter to the Curé of Biron, and begged him in case Lafond should not know how to read, a point which she had never clearly ascertained during her residence in Gascony, to make him acquainted with its contents ; but it so happened that the soldier could read, and write too, although in an imperfect manner, and on the eve of her marriage Mademoiselle de Gontaut received from him the following answer :

“ MADEMOISELLE.

“ I am very sensible of the honour you have done me. I never saw so many fine words in a letter before, or such beautiful writing. I have cut out your pretty little signature, and pasted it on a card. It lies between the leaves of my prayer-book,

next to the picture of my patron saint, the good St. John. As to the present you are so good as to enclose, I herewith return it. Monsieur le comte is very good to remember the likes of me, but Austrian money would not sit easily in Jean Lafond's pocket. I am only a poor peasant, who was once a soldier. Maybe that in your fine town of Paris the great folks call things by different names from what we have been used to do. In my time in the regiment we soldiers used to think that *honour* meant to stick by our colours. It means something else now, I suppose! and so, mademoiselle, you must excuse my simplicity, and please not to take it amiss. They tell us here at the chateau that you are about to be married to monsieur le comte, your cousin. May he prove true to you, and stick by your colours, my sweet lady; but maybe that is changed, too, now-a-days, and that people call it *honour*

for a man to forsake his wedded wife. I wish you, mademoiselle, your good health, and many years to enjoy it, and Paradise at the end of your days.¹

“Your obedient, faithful servant,

“LAFOND.

“POSTSCRIPT.

“The weather has been very bad. We are uneasy as to your health, mademoiselle, and M. le vicomte’s also, on account of the great mortality there has been amongst the geese.”²

When Judithe received this letter her cheeks flushed crimson, and tears of vexation stood in her eyes. She tore it into

¹ Old-fashioned form of salutation in France.

² The following passage occurs in Madame de Maintenon’s correspondence :

“I delight in the simplicity of my good peasants at Avon (a village near Fontainebleau). One of

pieces, but as she was about to throw the bits away she changed her mind, and thrust them into a drawer. Those simple words did not meet her eyes again for several years. By that time Lafond was reposing in the little village cemetery of Biron, and Judithe de Gontaut had learnt to know the meaning of the word *honour* when it is made to stand in the place of virtue and religion.

When she returned to M. de Bonneval his rejected gift, he looked both surprised and annoyed. The poor ignorant soldier's contempt, for he felt it to be such, wounded him to the quick. He had not felt half so keenly M. de St. Simon's icy-coldness and his cutting remarks. But to

them writes to me: 'Nous sommes inquiets de la santé du Roi, madame, et de la votre, à cause de la grande mortalité parmi les bêtes.'

She used to amuse the King with the *naïvetés* of her favourite villagers.

dissipate the cloud on his brow Judithe read to him poor Lafond's postscript, and it delighted him so much that he told the story at the Luxembourg, and amidst the laughter that it excited forgot his vexation.

And now the eve of the wedding-day has arrived; and the Marquise de Bonneval is sitting alone in that room where, for so many years, she has schemed and plotted, hoped and feared. She is expecting her son; he has promised to be with her by seven o'clock, and she is counting the minutes till that anxiously-expected moment.

Her health obliges her to keep early hours; the pallid hue of sickness is on her cheek, but her eyes sparkle with feverish animation. For the last few days she has vainly sought to obtain from her son some explanation of his future plans. Now she has resolved to insist upon a

definite answer, and to learn what she has to expect on that score; at all events, to oblige him to promise that he will return to France after the next campaign in Hungary.

When the Comte de Bonneval is announced, she turns deadly pale. Her physical strength is no longer in proportion with the energy of her character. She feels the hopelessness of a contest with that self-willed man, who, with a smile or a jest, breaks through every obstacle and sets aside every objection.

“Well, my son,” she begins, as he takes a seat opposite to her couch, “*at last* you vouchsafe to grant me a few moments. I ought to be thankful that your ceaseless engagements have allowed you to bestow *one hour* on your mother on such a day as this. There should be some confidential conversation between us on the eve of the most solemn event in your life.”

“Solemn! do you call it? In my opinion more tiresome than solemn. But that depends on a person’s turn of mind. You, madame, have always been fond of considering things in a tragical point of view. That is not at all in accordance with my practice.”

There was a tone of bitter irony in the mother’s accent, as she replied:

“No, indeed! To ‘enjoy the present and to let fools concern themselves about the future’ is, I am informed, your favourite maxim. In that case *my* life has doubtless been one long-continued piece of folly, and *yours*, on the contrary, the height of wisdom.”

“Why, really, my dear mother, I would strongly recommend you to follow my system. I have found it answer very well, and yours has only embittered your existence, and ruined your health. It would be but wise to try another.”

“And does the *present*, then, offer me so much happiness that I should sit down contented with it? Can I rely upon your prolonged residence in France, or, at all events, on your speedy return?”

“I have often told you, madame, that I may be at any moment compelled to return to Hungary, and that nothing can be more uncertain than my future movements. If you cannot reconcile yourself to this state of things it would have been better for you and for me, that I should never have left Vienna.”

“But how is it possible that, married in France, you should persist in remaining in the Austrian service? What do you intend to do with your wife?”

“Why, really, my dear mother, I think that *you* ought to be the person to answer that question, seeing that it is yourself who insisted on providing me with what

I assured you was a very troublesome, or rather a very useless, appendage to my mode of life. I told you a hundred times that it was the greatest folly in the world to force a wife upon me. You will one day be obliged to acknowledge it. I shall be as little of a married man as well can be."

"Are you really so heartless as deliberately to announce to me such an intention?" the marquise indignantly exclaimed.

"It is the truth, madame, and there would be no use in trying to conceal it. M. de Biron is, I assure you, perfectly satisfied with our present arrangements. He would very much regret that his son-in-law gave up a career that holds out far better prospects than any other in France or elsewhere. Judithe, too, I am convinced, never dreamed of such a thing. You alone, madame, could have thought

of such an absurd and ruinous piece of folly."

"Aye, that is like them all," the marquise bitterly ejaculated. "Titles, money, promotion! they think of; they live for nothing else. Fortune is their god. They worship no other deity!"

"Is it the first time that you have discovered this, madame? You must know more of the world, I should imagine, than to feel astonished at the fact. My bride, young as she is, would scarcely betray such simplicity."

"That girl is a hypocrite! She deceived me completely by her affected goodness. She is as worldly as the rest of them, and very artful besides."

"Oh, pray, my dear mother, do not be so unjust. She is, on the contrary, a very excellent and charming person, and I only wish that a happier fate was in store for her."

“But you are not, you never will be, in love with her?”

“I do not wish to make any rash assertions, but I certainly do not think it very likely that I should fall in love with my own wife.”

The marquise rose abruptly from her couch, and walked up and down the room with precipitate steps, now and then giving utterance to broken sentences, the sense of which M. de Bonneval found it difficult to catch.

“I lose him by my own imprudence! my own perverse folly! The reed on which I leant has failed me. If she had only tried to please him, if she had only entered into my views, he might have been worked upon ere now. Fool, that I was, to be beguiled by their interested suggestions! What has been the result? but that he marries a portionless girl, without spirit or feeling, who, instead of inducing

him to remain in France, actually drives him away. I see it all plainly at last. I have been miserably taken in. His return might have been easily brought about without their boasted interference. Of what advantage, after all, is this marriage to him? What do I gain by it? There is but one thing to be done. It must at once be broken off. They will raise up a clamour, but we can set them at defiance. Dubois has the Regent's ear."

While this agitated soliloquy was going on, M. de Bonneval kept watching his mother's gestures and countenance in silent astonishment. Now and then he quietly entreated her to be calm; but his composure only served to increase her irritation. At last she suddenly stopped her hurried pacing up and down, clasped her hands together, fixed her eyes upon him, and said, in a hollow voice:

“We must break off this marriage!”

“Are you gone out of your mind, my dear mother?” M. de Bonneval coldly replied.

“No; but I shall be miserable if you refuse to agree to what I now suggest. Yes, there is but one thing to do, instantly to break of this hateful marriage. That girl would make the misery of your life and mine. She is exceedingly cunning; she will interfere in your affairs, and sooner or later end by ruining you. Those Birons are a detestable family!”

“Whose alliance you have had the kindness to labour hard to procure for me,” her son rejoined, with a sneer. “It is a pity that it did not occur to you sooner to undo your own work; but at the point where we have arrived, the only way is to get through the wedding with the best grace we can, and have done with it.”

“That marriage is a perfect death-

blow to me," wildly ejaculated the marquise.

"In that case it has really been an act of suicide on your part. For you brought it most deliberately upon yourself. But, for Heaven's sake, what is the use of this discussion? It is a great weakness to lose time in lamenting over inevitable evils. Either make up your mind to it, with a smile and a shrug as I do, or in your own more heroic style, if you prefer it."

"But I repeat to you, my son, that you are not yet married to her."

"I admit that, madame."

"That you shall not marry her."

"There I must beg leave to differ from you."

"I will take upon myself to break it off."

"Pardon me, madame. When a man has pledged his faith, he does not leave it

to others to decide if he shall fulfil that pledge or not."

"Ah! it is a sense of honour that binds you?" the marquise satirically observed.

"Precisely so, madame. I do not allow that it is justifiable to forfeit one's word to a woman, any more than to a man. I am perfectly willing to fight every Biron in France, but not for the world would I put such an insult on Mademoiselle de Gontaut as to break off with her on the eve of the wedding-day."

"But you do not care for her," repeated his mother, wringing her hands, and shedding tears of grief and anger.

"Upon my word, my dear mother, you really must be beside yourself. Had you then for a moment supposed that, in imitation of my great prototype, the illustrious Hercules, I was going to spin out my days at the feet of this little Syren

in a farthingale? I am not a boy of sixteen."

The marquise sat down, leant her head upon her hand, and preserved a mournful silence. There are times when a jest is more overwhelming to the sore spirit than an insult.

M. de Bonneval yawned, looked at his watch, then at the clock on the mantelpiece, and said, as he rose to go:

"I am sorry to be obliged to leave you, my dear mother, but I have an engagement at the Luxembourg, and am expected there at eight."

"You are *expected*," Madame de Bonneval exclaimed, and she raised her pale, stern face, which was animated at that instant by a wild expression of passion and grief, "you are expected at the Luxembourg! Something would be wanting to the shameless orgy if your presence did not redeem, by something approaching to wit,

those ignoble excesses ! They are waiting for you at the Luxembourg, and I, your mother, for twenty long years have waited for you *here* ; and now !—oh, my God, well do I remember it. On the day of your birth a thunder-bolt fell on the cross of our church. That cross has weighed upon my heart ever since. It has crushed, it has broken it !”¹

After pronouncing these words with all the vehemence of despair, the marquise abruptly left the boudoir, and shut herself up in her bed-room. She never closed her eyes that night. The most extravagant projects were conceived and

¹ I believe it to be true, and I think it was my father who mentioned it to me, that there was an extraordinary storm on the day that he (Bonneval) came into the world, and that at the moment of his birth a thunder-bolt had fallen on the cross of the village church and destroyed it.—*Memoirs of the Prince de Ligne*.

discarded in turns by her heated imagination. Several times she rose, and began to write at her bureau, but every letter was torn and every project abandoned.

Third Chapter.

“Adversity, when it o’erpowers the mind
That suffers it, turns courage into rudeness,
And those quick feelings, in a prosperous hour
Tender and soft, into fell cruelty.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“When the vain bond was seal’d, so soon to sever,
When thou didst fondly deem a word had power
To bind two hearts for ever and for ever;
And love, and hope, and fear in fitful fever
Thrilled through thy heart from morn’s first dawning grey,
And as thou saw’st it break so joyous, never
Could’st thou have dreamed of that sad parting day,
Which tear nor prayer of thine could for one hour delay.”

LADY NORTHAMPTON.

THE sun was gilding with its morning
radiance a room from which peace and
sleep had both fled that night. Its rays

seemed to shine in mockery on the fearfully pale face of the Marquise de Bonneval, on the diamonds, the feathers, and the spangled gown which she was about to wear. She kept a profound silence while her attendants were engaged in dressing her, but a nervous agitation, which she vainly strove to master, was visible not only in her features, but in the trembling of her whole frame. It increased to a fearful degree while she was driving to the Hotel de Biron.

A crowd of idle persons was gathered together round the entrance of that aristocratic abode, examining the carriages as they passed by, admiring the dresses of the ladies, and indulging in all the comments and criticisms which a mob of that description are prone to make on such an occasion on individuals of a higher class of society.

The relations and friends of both families were gradually assembling in the drawing-

room to witness the signing of the marriage-contract before proceeding to the parish church for the religious ceremony. As the different individuals invited for that purpose drove up to the door, the spectators in the street kept pointing out to each other any amongst them who were known to the public, whether by their position at Court or their rank in the army, or the liveries of their servants. Jests of a somewhat scurrilous description flew from mouth to mouth at the appearance of personages of unenviable notoriety, or of ladies of the Court more renowned for beauty than for virtue.

Meanwhile the plot thickened within, and the assemblage proved of a somewhat incongruous character. Many of M. de Bonneval's friends belonged rather to the party of the Duc du Maine and the Society of Sceaux than to the Court of the Regent.

The ancient friendship that united the family of the bride with the former *habitués* of Madame de Maintenon's boudoir had brought on this occasion to the Hotel de Biron persons who looked askance at the Abbé Dubois, and with no favourable eye upon the satellites of the Regent and the frequenters of the Luxembourg. Madame de Caylus was one of these, whose attachment to the friend of her childhood, Madame d'Urfé, had led her to accept the invitation : safely ensconced between her and M. de Bonrepos, whose silence and depression she noticed and gently rallied, Madame de Caylus kept turning her beautiful eyes towards some of the present company with as contemptuous an expression as their loveliness knew how to assume.

M. Arouët de Voltaire,¹ who had been

¹ Voltaire in his youth had met the Comte de Bonneval at the house of the Grand Prieur de Vendôme. He makes frequent mention of him

invited by the Comte de Bonneval, was at one moment jesting with the Abbé de Moissac, and at the next overwhelming with compliments some of the very persons he had ridiculed the preceding day in one of those savage lampoons, transmitted ere the ink had had time to dry into the hands of the sovereign lady of Sceaux.

The bridegroom was himself engaged in conversation with M. de Riom, M. Macarthy, and the Abbé Dubois, his devoted admirers. The ferret-looking countenance of the last-mentioned personage expanded into a smile as he lent a delighted ear to his noble friend's witticisms, the grace, figure, and beauty of whose features formed a remarkable contrast with the mean and coarse appearance of his companions.

in his writings. In one of the Abbé Dubois letters to M. de Bonneval, he says: "I send you a letter from little Aroûet."

That aristocratic assembly, which was gathered together to witness the marriage of Judithe de Gontaut with the Comte de Bonneval, presented many such curious contrasts. Vice and virtue, old age and childhood, innocence and intrigue, loveliness and deformity, were to be seen in close vicinity.

As at all weddings, there was an abundance of smiles and of tears; and, as will always happen when men meet together fresh from the struggles of party, and the rivalities of Courts, there were little under-hand manœuvres, acts of social vengeance cleverly combined and adroitly accomplished. Flattery dexterously addressed to some, rebukes, in a polite form, directed to others, and all the while love and hope, fear, joy and suffering playing their parts unremittingly in the midst of that brilliant and animated scene.

But soon, in addition to all other sentiments, was superadded one of profound astonishment in the minds of all present, and most especially of the relatives of the affianced pair. Everything was ready for the signature of the contract. Madame de Biron had gone in quest of her daughter, when the Marquise de Bonneval, who, from the moment of her arrival, had stood leaning against a pillar as motionless as a marble statue, scarcely replying a word to the compliments that were addressed to her, suddenly rushed towards the door, and made her exit with a rapidity that took everyone by surprise.

Her son whispered to the Abbé Dubois:

“I do not know what has come over my mother. After moving heaven and earth to bring about this marriage, she has, all at once, set her face against it. There is no fathoming a woman’s inconceivable caprices!”

When Madame de Biron re-entered the room, holding her daughter by the hand, all eyes were turned upon them. Judithe was looking very lovely in her bridal dress. The wreath of pure white flowers which she wore became her open brow and delicate features. She was apparently calm, and in her face there was an expression that did not indicate either joy or sorrow, but rather the serenity of one who enters on a new phase of existence with more enthusiasm than hope, with more of glad acquiescence than of sanguine anticipation. She did not, even at that moment, look forward to a life of much happiness. It is not in general the most ardent and enthusiastic natures who are the most exacting in their expectations, the most high-flown in their ideas of bliss. The worldly and the cold are often more imperious in their demands, more bent upon happiness, or whatever they call

by that name. They have no sunshine in their own hearts wherewith to gild their fate.

When M. de Bonneval addressed to his young bride some of those compliments which he so well knew how to couch in graceful language, she only replied by a look of affection, and the utterance of those three words:

“My dear master;” that name which she had bestowed upon him in secret long before her lips had ventured to pronounce it.

In the meantime Madame de Bonneval’s disappearance, not from the crowded *salon* only, but from the Hotel de Biron, became an ascertained fact. The servants had seen her get into her carriage, and heard her give the order:

“To the Hotel de Béthune.”

A general feeling of curiosity and surprise pervaded the assembly. Dissatisfaction and

annoyance were visible in the faces of several members of both families. M. de Biron was disturbed. His wife turned pale with anger, and looked at M. de Bonneval with suspicion and resentment. He did not notice it, for he had drawn the Duc de Béthune aside, and was speaking to him in a low voice.

The strangers who were present vainly endeavoured to look unconcerned. Everybody was wondering and watching, and the faint attempts at conversation that were made soon came to a stand still, so great was the curiosity to know the meaning of this strange disappearance.

“It is inconceivable, it is unheard of,” exclaimed M. de Lauzun, and he paced up and down the room with all the impetuosity of a young man of twenty.

M. de Bonneval, on the contrary, maintained a perfect composure, and said to the

Duc de Béthune, loud enough for everyone to hear :

“I beseech you, my lord duke, to be so obliging as to follow my mother to your house, where it appears she has withdrawn, and to entreat her, if her health will permit it, to return at once with you, and spare me the painful regret of her absence on such an occasion. I doubt not that a sudden faintness, the result of emotion, overcame her for a moment, but I trust to your kindness to soothe her spirits, and to induce her to return.” Then, as he accompanied the duke to the door, he added in a whisper : “May I beg of you to assure the Marquise de Bonneval that if she persists in staying away I shall nevertheless be married in an hour, but shall set off for Vienna the instant the ceremony is performed, and never set eyes on her again as long as I live. I swear it on the honour of a

gentleman — the most binding oath I know.”

The Duc de Béthune shook hands with him, and after exchanging a few words with the Marquis de Biron, set off on his somewhat unpromising mission. He would rather have faced a charge of cavalry than the hysterical violence of the proud woman he had to cope with.

The society he left behind found it difficult to while away the time of his absence, or to conceal the embarrassment which was sensibly experienced by all parties.

M. de Bonneval alone never seemed the least disconcerted; he kept all the time conversing with his bride, or rather addressing his conversation to her, with exquisite tact and kindness, and a graceful mixture of earnestness and playfulness.

Judithe could not guess at the cause of his mother's disappearance, but this

strange caprice had painfully disturbed her, and her countenance betrayed the anxiety she felt.

Madame de Biron, by her gestures and occasional ejaculations, gave vent to her annoyance. Her temper was of a nature that inclined rather to resent what she regarded as an insult to her daughter than considerately to spare that daughter's feelings. Judithe was deeply grieved at the undisguised animosity of a person whose affection for her had so unaccountably turned to hatred.

There is nothing so oppressive to the spirits as the enmity of those who once have loved us. But the voice of her husband, of her master, of the one object of her early affection, is now cheering and soothing her in this moment of trial. He is at her side to protect and support her. He whispers to her words of love; he bends upon her looks of kindness; he

smiles away her fears, and dissipates her embarrassment. What deep feelings of gratitude spring up in her heart the while; how everyone of those minutes adds something to the intensity of her affection for that gallant soldier, for that much-loved cousin, to whom she is about to plight her troth! And she does not dream the while, it never occurs to her poor child, that all this gentle kindness, this tender consideration with which he treats her, are owing neither to love nor to duty, but simply to the perfect good breeding of an accomplished gentleman. He has promised to marry her, and he will keep that promise. She has been unfairly dealt with, and in the eyes of the world, at least, he will atone for that injustice. She is his bride, and now not even his mother shall dare to insult her! but the vows he is about to pronounce at the foot of the altar, —will it be with him a point of honour to

keep them? Does he even intend to do so?

Alas! are there not men of high lineage, and more than common merit, whose passion is honour, whose boast is integrity, who scruple not deliberately to set at nought the most solemn engagement a man can take? The world may not condemn that breach of faith, but a woman's broken heart may yet witness against them, and a just God call them to account!

The suspense was becoming every moment more embarrassing; and some of the parties concerned were getting impatient at the Duc de Béthune's prolonged absence. M. de Lauzun had proposed, and M. de Bonneval agreed to the suggestion, that the signature of the contract should take place without further delay, when, to the relief of everyone, the sound of a carriage was heard, and a moment afterwards the Marquise de Bonneval

appeared, supported by the Duc de Béthune, looking like a man who, after encountering a storm, has brought his vessel into port. He had, indeed, gone through an arduous scene.¹ The impetuous nature of the woman he had had to deal with had thrown off all the restraint which prudence had so long imposed upon her. Weakened nerves and increased irritability had deprived her of all self-control, her strength exhausting itself more and more in passionate outbreaks. In vain the duke urged upon her every argument that reason could adduce. She was perfectly resolved, she

¹ The Marquise de Bonneval, whose character seems to have been as impetuous as that of her son, and who had changed her mind about his marriage just as the ceremony was about to take place, suddenly left the Hotel de Biron, and withdrew to the Duc de Béthune's house, who had all the trouble in the world to persuade her to return and assist at the marriage.—*The Prince de Ligne's Memoirs*.

him, not to sanction by her presence a marriage which she was now convinced would be fatal to her son's interests, and despair made her intractable. She yielded, however, at last, but only in consequence of the threat conveyed in the message which he had sent her. The terror she felt at the idea of his departure overcame her obstinacy. To that paramount fear she gave way, but with the worst possible grace.

On her way back to the Hotel de Biron she ceased not to complain of her son's cruelty, who, not content with breaking her heart by his marriage, insisted on her witnessing the ceremony that was to set the seal to her misery. Her excited and all but delirious imagination represented to her that once ardently-desired event only as a misfortune to be at any price averted.

It was with the look, and almost

the feelings, of a person led to execution that she once more entered the doors of her cousin's house. Silently and gloomily she affixed her name to the contract, and during the religious ceremony never once turned her eyes towards her son or his bride. The instant it was concluded she again withdrew, without addressing a single word to her daughter-in-law or to any of her relations.

Judithe keenly felt the injustice of this treatment, but, by a strong effort, maintained her composure, and as long as the eyes of strangers were upon her, did not give way to the various emotions which that trying hour awakened. At the instant of pronouncing the words which for ever linked her fate with that of the Comte de Bonneval, she chanced to raise her eyes to the image of the "Mater Dolorosa," which stood over the altar where their vows were exchanged. The

eyes of that Mother of Mercy seemed fixed upon her with a mournful expression. She remembered, so strangely rapid is thought, that in her childhood she had removed from the foot of her bed a similar picture and placed her cousin's likeness in its place. This recollection had haunted her with a vague sense of remorse, and now she seemed to read in that sweet sorrowful face a warning of grief to come.

“To love and to suffer,” she inwardly murmured, as her trembling hand was placed in her cousin's. “I accept the pre-sage.” “To enter heaven through much tribulation,” was whispered by her guardian angel, and she bowed her head in acquiescence.

The marriage vows have been exchanged, and that young girl's fate is sealed. Henceforward she is bound to one whose reckless course has been, and will be, wild as the waves, uncertain as the winds.

Her pure and loving heart, her noble qualities, her heavenward aspirations, are all absorbed in overweening earthly affection.

The false brilliancy of that light which lured her imagination in the days of childhood still sheds its deceptive halo round the object of her idolatry. She resembles a flower, which should have blossomed on the fresh mountain heights, or in the peaceful shade of some quiet valley, but whose destiny has cast it in the way of an impetuous torrent—carried along by the rushing waters—floating for a while on the turbid swelling foam—it is soon left upon the rocks, there to wither and to die.

How we shudder, sometimes, at the thought that upon a few hastily-uttered words, a brief instant of time, hangs the fate of a whole existence! Aye! and well might we tremble at the shipwrecks

of happiness that go on every day around us—at the mistakes that are made by the young, at the blessings they forfeit, the miseries they incur—if happiness was indeed to be our principal aim in this short-lived world. But if we look upon life as a journey, a school, or a race, then it seems less important whether the discipline be severe, the road tedious, the turf soft under our feet. We have other solitudes for ourselves and those we love,—other cares, other aims. We learn to fear the broad road of prosperity more than the narrow path of trial. Grieve not then overmuch for those who seem marked out for the baptism of suffering—the winds that blow so fiercely may be driving them into port; nor for the lonely ones of earth, apparently abandoned on the solitary strand of a joyless existence. Their hour will come, their

reward is at hand; it is even now stamped upon their foreheads, on which we seem to read those five words of strange power:

“Blessed are those that mourn.”

Fourth Chapter.

“And in his face she saw a something new;
It was not quite a frown, but the arch'd brow
Seemed as some thwarting influence had pass'd through
And marred the lines so perfect until now.”

LADY NORTHAMPTON.

“Night of music, night of loving,
Lost too soon, remember'd long,
When we went by moonlight roving,
Hearts all love, and lips all song.
Night of beauty, night of splendour,
Filled with joys too sweet to last,
Joys that like the starlight, kinder
While they shone, no shadow cast.
Though all other happy hours
From my fading mem'ry fly,
Of that starlight, of those bowers,
Not a beam, a leaf shall die.”

MOORE.

“And is he gone? on sudden solitude
How oft that fearful question will intrude!
’Twas but an instant past! and here he stood!”

BYRON.

THERE are persons who seem to possess
a kind of inherent capability of inspiring

affection without going out of their way to seek it, or putting much value on what it costs them so little to obtain. It does not occur to them that much gratitude is due for feelings spontaneously bestowed upon them, and withheld by none, or scarcely anyone, they have to do with. Their selfishness is disguised, or rather adorned, by so much open-heartedness, gaiety, and charm of manner, that they are beloved even by those who suffer most from their defects. This was eminently the case with the Comte de Bonneval. Many of those who might have had reasons to hate him were, in spite of themselves, compelled to love him.¹ Nature had bestowed upon him so many of her richest gifts. He was so handsome, so

¹ He (Bonneval) was so agreeable, that his faults were always forgotten.—*Voltaire*.

To see him and to love him were the same things.—*Letter of the Chevalier de Bauffremont*.

clever, so eloquent! His young wife, who had never known what it was to be vain of her own high lineage, beauty and talents, gloried in bearing his loved name, felt her cheeks flush with conscious pride when addressed by her new title, and as she signed her first letters to her sisters, gazed with delight on the words "Biron de Bonneval," exulting in the thought that henceforward the fame, the successes, the misfortunes of her husband had become part and parcel of her own existence. Judithe's character combined some apparently opposite qualities. A high-wrought enthusiasm with much common-sense, a calm temper with excitable feelings. From the very outset of her married life she had to go through the struggle of upholding M. de Bonneval's character in the eyes of others, and by a continual mental effort to keep up her own illusions.

The *truth* breaks slowly on the self-

deceived mind. A cherished vision long maintains its ground against opposing realities. Love, hope, and imagination furnish the means of carrying on the unequal contest. But the day comes at last, when imagination fades away, hope falters, and love despairs. But those three mighty agents were at work, with all their vital energy, in Judithe's heart, when, on the morrow of her wedding-day, she had to mediate between her husband and her mother. She learnt even then that lesson so hard a one to the young,—to smile on suffering.

Her husband had received that very morning a letter from Vienna, which warned him that the Imperial Army was about immediately to take the field, and that a command which he had been most anxious to obtain ran the risk, through his absence, of being conferred on another. When he received this intelligence an impatient ex-

clamation burst from his lips, and he spoke of hastening his departure.

Judithe did not utter a single word of complaint or remonstrance. An unqualified submission to his will seemed to her the only means of retaining the affection of him whom she liked to call "her master." But she did not quite succeed in concealing her emotion, tears started into her eyes, and M. de Bonneval observed it. Whether he himself felt at the bottom of his heart some regret at the thoughts of so soon parting with his young wife, or some misgivings of conscience as to the sorrow he was about to cause her, or that the sight of her grief simply annoyed and disturbed him; whatever was the cause, a sudden cloud obscured his brow, and for the remainder of the day he maintained a gloomy silence.

Madame de Biron took notice of his ill-humour, and not having herself recovered from the profound irritation which his

mother's conduct had excited in her the preceding day, she felt disposed to quarrel with him on the first occasion. And now his sulky and dejected manner redoubled her indignation. She spoke to him several times with apparent civility indeed, but, under the garb of common-place observations, contrived to throw out inuendoes highly offensive to his pride. For instance, she alluded, as if by chance, to the means which had been employed to obtain his *pardon*, dwelling upon that word with marked and almost insulting emphasis. An angry flush crimsoned his face; he almost bit his lips through, and walked away to a window, without vouchsafing a reply. She followed him, and, laying her thin hand upon his arm, said, with a sneer:

“It must be owned that the moroseness of your manner ill becomes a bridegroom.”

M. de Bonneval turned to her, with a

burst of impatience that she was not prepared for, and exclaimed :

“I am vexed to death at having married.”

Madame de Biron turned first as red as fire, and then pale again with anger :

“Had you said this yesterday morning,” she said, in an agitated voice, “it would have been better for us all.”¹

At that moment Judithe entered the room, looking so pretty, that her mother’s exasperation only increased at the thoughts that her husband so grievously undervalued her. She had not the sort of disposition that leads a person to re-

¹ On the morrow of the wedding the Marquise de Biron, observing that her son-in-law looked gloomy, attacked him upon it.

“I am grieved at having married,” he answered.

“You had better have told me so yesterday,” the marquise indignantly replied.—*Memoirs of the Prince de Ligne.*

strain the expression of their own feelings in order not to wound those of others. She was much more sensitive to her daughter's wrongs than anxious to spare her pain, and accordingly, with great excitement of voice and manner, addressed her as follows:

“M. de Bonneval has had the kindness and the good taste to inform me, my daughter, that he greatly regrets having married you. It is but due to your own dignity that you should assure him that your feelings on that point are similar to his.”

Judithe looked at her husband with one of those smiles that touch those who understand the sadness of *such* smiles far more than tears, and taking her mother's hand in hers, she said:

“Do you think it strange, dearest mother, that my cousin should feel some regret at having married, when he knows that he must so soon part with his little

wife. I suppose he is afraid that she will forget him?"

As she said these words her eyes were raised to his with an expression of such devoted affection, that the heart of that selfish, but not altogether unfeeling, man was deeply touched. As much as was in his nature, he felt grateful to the woman whose "soft answer had indeed turned away wrath," and seizing her hand, he pressed it over and over again to his lips. Her hopes rose again, and her spirits revived.

"Surely," she thought, "my patient love must win back love at last;¹ love, such as my own, pure, constant, and ardent. Can any man fail in the end to reward with his affection one whose whole heart is devoted to him; one who will never utter a reproach, or a complaint. How should she complain?

¹ "Surely that humble, patient love
Must win back love at last."—*Mrs. Hemans.*

the woman whose duty, pride, and joy it is to live, and, if needs be, to die for him. Even now I have had an ample share of blessings, enough to make up for years of trial to come. Is it not enough for me that I am his wife? A few days of happiness, then a kind farewell, a parting kiss, a letter now and then, memory and hope! is that not enough to fill up a whole existence? No, no, I do not complain; I never shall complain! My lifelong prayer has been granted. I bear his name. I share his fate. I would not exchange my lot for the brightest that this world can offer."

Such were the secret musings of that resigned and loving heart, of that ardent and patient spirit, at the very outset of her married life. She carried these thoughts with her into the gay and brilliant assemblies which followed her wedding. In the midst of *fêtes* and parties, she saw nothing

but her husband's stately form, towering above the crowd; listened to nothing but his voice, every accent of which she watched for, as if fearing that one single tone or inflexion should escape her. Every evening she wrote down not only his brilliant sayings but also the least word, however insignificant, that had fallen from his lips. She set a mark upon every object that he accidentally touched in her room, that it might serve hereafter as a token of his presence. The pen he had once used; the sheet of paper he had written upon and thrown aside; the book he had taken up to read, were all preserved as treasures for the time of absence.

Twice, as they were setting off for a ball, her husband had given her a nosegay. For a long time those withered roses stood on her table, and when they mouldered away at last, and crumbled into dust, no other flowers took their place. By that time

the brightness had departed from her own heart.

The formal wedding-dinners, and the necessary round of visits to the relations of both families, wearied M. de Bonneval almost beyond endurance. All social duties were irksome to him, and he sighed after the freedom of his Vienna existence. He consoled himself however with the prospect of a speedy release from such bondage, and submitted to it in the meanwhile with a tolerable grace. He frequently took refuge in his wife's boudoir. Her agreeable conversation, ready tact, and sweetness of temper were by no means lost upon him. For the time being he rather enjoyed her society, and found it agreeable enough to be the object of so ardent, and yet so unobtrusive, an attachment.

She was always watching to promote his comfort, eager to listen to his plans, and to sympathise with his interests.

Used as he had been to his mother's tyrannical and exacting disposition, it was a pleasing novelty to find himself the object of a love as pure as Judithe's from the least taint of selfishness. A kind word from him, the slightest mark of affection, or even of common attention, was received by her with gratitude, and acknowledged with a sweetness of manner which seemed to inspire him with feelings almost resembling tenderness, sufficiently so, at least, to deceive a heart so willing as hers to be deceived. It was likewise a surprise to him when he found that his young and timid wife understood matters of business, and knew how to discuss political and military subjects sufficiently well to give interest to their conversation.

At her request he saw his men of business in her room, and imparted to her various particulars regarding the state of his affairs. She applied herself with un-

wearied assiduity to master these details, in order to converse with him upon them, or even to be of use to him during his absence.

Quick as he was in discerning the characters of those he had to deal with, M. de Bonneval soon perceived that he could implicitly rely on his wife's prudence and discretion, as well as on her affection. He gave her in consequence the most entire confidence. When he fixed the day for his departure, it was to her that he imparted it, desiring her at the same time to keep it a secret from his mother.

When Judithe, on the fourth day after her marriage, learnt that in six days more her husband would leave her, she felt the keenest pang of sorrow, but this time she did not shed a tear, nor did she even breathe an audible sigh. Proud that he had trusted her, she undertook the painful responsibility of concealing the truth from

his mother, whose reproaches and complaints were becoming every day more vehement. It was prudent, perhaps, on M. de Bonneval's part to spare himself and the marquise scenes of violence and recrimination which would have embittered the last days they had to spend together. It was, however, imposing a heavy task on his wife, who, after his departure, would have to stand alone the full brunt of her mother-in-law's despair and anger. "But there are persons whose business it is to suffer and to bear the burthens of others." Such is the sentiment, not exactly thrown into so many words, but tacitly acted upon by the selfish portion of mankind. In the strength of that conviction they never scruple to lay the whole weight of a load, which they themselves cannot endure, on the loving hearts that never shrink from a sacrifice, or falter before a trial.

Those *first* days of marriage, those *last*

days of happiness, how short, at once, and how long they must have appeared to the young Comtesse de Bonneval. *Long*, for every hour and every minute were stamped with hopes and fears, with joys and misgivings. *Short*, for they went by with startling rapidity.

The sun shone with unremitting splendour on those early days of the year; those ten days of bliss. Who, that has witnessed it, can ever forget that bridal of the earth and sky,—the spring in Paris. The horse-chesnuts, the lilacs, the guelder roses, in full blossom, pervading with their perfume the royal gardens, designed by Lenôtre. The bells of Nôtre-Dame, mingling their joyous chimes with the voices of the crowd; the sound of the carriages; the gay laughter of children. The glorious sunshine of France bathing in floods of light the bridges, the quays, the islands of the Seine, the flower-markets, the fountains, the

squares of the great city. Gaiety in every face, music at every turn ; each promenade a festival, and every day a holiday !

And the environs of Paris ! Reader, have you visited those scenes, so fraught with natural beauty, so richly adorned by art, so full of history's most thrilling memories ? Each ancient palace a book, each ruin a record, each name a story. Versailles, with its brilliant and tragical associations. Fontainebleau, and its time-honoured forest. The wide, stately terraces of St. Germain and Meudon. The smiling hills of Suresnes and of Marly ; and, less familiar to the ear, but dear to the heart of those who have dwelt in their shade and lingered through their paths, the fragrant woods of la Celle. There the Spanish-chesnuts load the air with the scent of their delicate blossoms. The wild flowers in profusion attract the honey-seeking insects. The thyme and the violets carpet each mossy

bank; from a sky, as blue as that of Italy, through the waving branches of the acacia trees, the sun throws fitful gleams on the soft turf; and beyond, in the wide plain, like a queen on her throne, the ancient city sits in her pride, with her crown of domes and her coronet of spires. Aye! very fair are these scenes, and gladsome in our eyes when, with

“Youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm,”
we bask in the sunshine, and gild the future with bright dreams!

The Comtesse de Bonneval yielded to the magic influence of that bewitching spell. It seemed as if nature was sympathising with her short-lived happiness. Objects long familiar to her sight seemed fraught with new charms. She felt inclined to salute her own “*plaisant Pays de France*” with the same enthusiasm with which Mary Stuart addressed to its lessen-

ing shores her last touching and prophetic farewell. Joy made its way into her young heart, but the momentary light was often obscured by clouds; in the murmurs of the sweet breeze, ever and anon, she seemed to hear a fitful whisper that frightened away the gaiety which for a moment animated her manner and sparkled in her eyes. Sorrow was at hand, and her tears would sometimes flow, even, as on a stormy day,

“The first drops of a thunder shower fall heavy one by one,”

while the broad landscape is still illuminated with the rays of the sun.

At the same time that she avoided wearying her husband with questions she would always ingeniously strive to introduce into their conversations something relating to the future. She liked to use such phrases as, “when you return,” or,

“when we meet again;” and if he accidentally said, “when I return,” or, “when I see you again,” then a quick throb of joy hurried the pulsation of her heart, and for a while her spirits revived.

Those ten days of marriage had happy moments, disappointments, and incidents that made them appear like a kind of epitome of life. One of the brightest pages in Judithe’s book of memory was the recollection of a *fête* at Sceaux,¹ to which she had gone with her husband and one of his aunts; for her own family were at that time too closely connected with the Regent’s Court, often to take part in the amusements of the Duc and Duchesse du Maine.

¹ Madame la Duchesse du Maine continues her festivities. From time to time there is at Sceaux what are called the “*Nuits blanches*.” They are marked by great magnificence and wit.—*Dangeau’s Journal*.

It must be owned that the tone of that Princess's society, although often objectionable, was of a higher order than that which prevailed at the Palais Royal and the Luxembourg. She was the sovereign queen, the fairy ruler of a kingdom of fashion and of wit, and her inventive genius was constantly employed on a variety of devices for her own entertainment, the exercise of her talents, and the exhibition of her accomplishments.

It was the first time that Judithe had witnessed one of those renowned *fêtes* of Sceaux, which excelled everything of the sort in variety and splendour. Thousands of tapers, reflected by numberless mirrors, dazzled the eyes. The gorgeous dresses and rich brocaded costumes of the day added the effect of their colouring to the general brilliancy of the scene. Everything was life, excitement, and gaiety. The music enchanting, the conversation lively

in the extreme. The cleverest men and the most beautiful women of the day vied in their homage to the tiny mistress of the revels, who seemed by the waving of her hand to conjure up those scenes of delight, and to animate them with her own flashing and volatile spirit.¹

Amidst all these objects of interest and attraction, Judithe had eyes for her husband only. She saw, she heard but him. She felt proud of the admiration he inspired, of the position he occupied amidst that fastidious and refined society. Some of the most distinguished personages present were

¹ Madame du Maine is not taller than a child of ten years old. Her figure is not good, but she has a very pretty face. She is fair, and her eyes are beautiful. Her mouth is large, and she wears a great deal of rouge. Her grace and a general charm about all her person, causes her to be more admired than regularly handsome women. She is full of wit and information.—*Lettres de Madame de Bavière.*

eager to show him attention; the women highest in rank and the loveliest in Paris smiled upon him, and she had no occasion that day to be uneasy at those smiles and those looks, alluring as they were, for he had taken a fancy to please her whom he had “made his wedded wife yestréen,”¹ to let her know for once, ever after to remember it, what it is to be cared for, caressed, and cherished by an adored husband. He indulged her to her very bent; he lavished upon her all those endearing attentions, which, in her child-like simplicity and youthful trust, she deemed to be proofs of love. Every wish she expressed he complied with, every request she made was granted.

“Take me into those beautiful gardens, my dear master,” she timidly whispered, and he gladly assented. Together for hours they wandered through those lovely bowers, those

¹ “The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestréen.”—*Burns*.

gay *parterres*, where the little Duchesse du Maine held her fanciful court. They ascended wide flights of marble stairs; stood on the flowery ramparts, supported by verdant walls of sweet-smelling shrubs; lingered amidst groves of lilacs and laburnums; lost themselves in labyrinths of hyacinths and tulips; strayed into mossy caves and coral-built caverns. They watched the moon as it rose in the calm clear sky, they saw it shed its silvery light on sleeping nymphs and fantastic fawns, reclining on the green sward, or crouching in the thickets. They listened to the murmurs of the ever-flowing fountains, to the song of the nightingale, the cooing of the wood-pigeon in the tall trees of the park; but sweeter than the song of the nightingale, more soothing than the murmur of the fountain, or the distant notes of the turtle-dove was the voice that spoke in Judithe's ear words of tenderness and love. With far too deep, too blind a

worship, she hung on the lips from which these accents fell.

M. de Bonneval playfully rallied her on the youthful enthusiasm with which she explored every recess of those enchanting gardens. He smiled to see her enamoured of a flower, enraptured with a bird, in ecstasies with the air, with the earth, and with the sky. It was a pleasant evening to him ; he liked to give pleasure, if he could please himself at the same time ; but, oh, it is a cruel sport, a reckless pastime, that dealing with a woman's heart as if it was a toy to be played with one day and thrown aside on the morrow. To fill it to the brim with happiness, and never after that single draught to allay its quenchless thirst ! And yet, who knows, who can tell, that even in her hours of deepest dejection, of saddest retrospection, Judithe did not find a secret sweetness in the remembrance of the *fête* of Sceaux, that she did not say to herself:

“And come what may I have been blest,” blest in the consciousness that for a few moments, at least, her husband had seemed to set a value on her love; had justified, by his evanescent fondness, her own life-long devotion, her unchanging affection. But be that as it may, joy was in her eyes, and gladness in her step, as she re-entered the gay saloons of the palace; the radiant smile with which she returned the salutations of her young acquaintance seemed to anticipate their congratulations, and to claim their sympathy. She trod on air, she felt her spirits too light, too buoyant, for the common intercourse of life; she was the happiest of the happy; she longed to whisper it to *him*, to proclaim it to the world. At that moment her eyes met those of her old friend M. de Bonrepos fixed upon her with an expression of sadness, bordering on compassion. She made as if she would speak to him, but her husband was at her side,

and he moved hastily away. From a distance he appeared to watch her with the same mournful attention. She guessed that he pitied her, and indignantly resented it. Meanwhile her carriage was announced, and M. de Bonneval hastened to put on her cloak with all the fond attention that he was that night in the humour to bestow upon her. She turned round, with an almost triumphant countenance, and looked at M. de Bonrepos; but at the same instant the Abbé Macarthy came up to her husband, and whispered to him, but loud enough for her to hear:

“Well, and when do you set off?”

“Monday, at six,” was the answer.

Judithe knew that he was going, too well she knew it, but for the last few hours so intense had been her enjoyment of the present, that the future had, for the time being, vanished from her thoughts. The words of the abbé awakened her from her dream of bliss.

“Well, but what of that!” she inwardly exclaimed, with a sort of feverish selfishness, “what of that, after all? I am his wife, his own wedded wife. It cannot be that, loving him as I do, anything on earth can long part us.”

Alas! she had yet to learn, poor helpless child, that there are no impossibilities where suffering is concerned; that “it cannot be,” or “it must be,” are words too bold for our use. That we must never venture to say: “Such a fate can never be mine.” Fate is the atheist’s name for God’s Will. To that Will we can assign no limits. To His decrees no opposition.

Each time that the morning dawned, each time that the shades of night closed in, the young Countess de Bonneval felt her heart sink within her.

“Another day of happiness gone! one day less than yesterday to look forward to,” she sorrowfully ejaculated. If her

husband was long absent from her sight she grudged each of those hours as the miser does every piece of gold out of his treasure.

The *fête* of Sceaux had taken place on a Thursday. On the following day there was a great assembly at the Hotel de Béthune; and on the Saturday the new-married couple and several members of their families were invited to spend the day at the Duc de Lauzun's villa at Passy.

Most of the company rode, and Judithe amongst the rest. M. de Bonneval was astonished and amused to see their host, at ninety years of age, managing an unbroken colt that had unseated some of the best riders in Paris.¹

¹ When more than ninety years of age Lauzun still excelled in breaking horses, and once in the Bois de Boulogne, as the King was going to the Muette, he made a hundred curvets before him on a colt which he had just taken in hand, and that was scarcely broken in. All the spec-

“You will do as much at his age,” his wife whispered to him, with a smile.

At that moment her own horse, excited by the curvets of the duke's steed, gave a jump, which nearly threw her off her balance. She uttered a cry of alarm, and in an instant her husband was by her side, and lifting her off the saddle, he offered her his arm to conduct her home. She refused to give up her ride, and insisted on remounting.

“You were alarmed?” he said.

“I thought I was about to fall,” she answered, “and involuntarily cried out; but such a trifling danger does not really frighten one.”

“Indeed?” M. de Bonneval replied, with an incredulous smile. “Then you are quite a heroine, after all!”

tators were astonished at his skill, and at the firmness and the grace of his seat.—*St. Simon's Memoirs.*

“Not much of a heroine,” she said, in a low voice, “when I think of the fearful perils which my dear master is about to run.”

Though she had some difficulty in subduing her fears during the rest of the ride, for she was naturally timid, still no outward sign of them appeared. She conversed with her husband with as much animation as usual; watched every turn of his countenance, entertained him with playful descriptions of her great uncle’s peculiarities, and traits of his romantic history. She effectually succeeded in concealing from him every symptom of nervousness. She had it so much at heart to convince him that she was not a timid woman or a helpless child, but would prove a fitting wife for a soldier, and a helpmate in all the trying occasions of life. The study, the passion of her soul, was to please him, to win his love, and, maybe,

even on his fickle nature and wayward spirit, she might have gained an influence, had not time utterly failed her.

Vainly did she strive to improve each passing moment; irrevocably, relentlessly, the hours went by, and the dreaded day of his departure was at hand. What had hitherto been a secret now became generally known,—the Comte de Bonneval was to leave Paris early the next day; but still he contrived to conceal the fact from his mother. On the eve of his departure he spent an hour with her, and, as he was leaving the room, embraced her with more tenderness than usual, but without giving her to suppose that that adieu was a final farewell.

Business of various kinds, visits of friendship and of ceremony, took up a great portion of the day.

Judithe, with pale cheeks and tearful eyes, was counting the minutes,

as they went by, with feverish despondency.

During the instants that intervened between these various appointments, M. de Biron kept engaging his son-in-law in discussions on politics, money-matters, plans of campaign, and at last proposed to carry him off to the Palais Royal, to take leave of the Regent. He little guessed at the suffering he was inflicting on his daughter. Everyone seemed combining to rob her of those last precious moments, for the quiet enjoyment of which she would have sacrificed whole years of tranquillity.

“Alas! alas!” she kept exclaiming, as she sat in expectation of her husband’s return, and wrung her hands in anguish, “only two or three more hours happiness (what a strange name to give to what so much resembled misery), and without remorse they deprive me of them.”

There was to be that night a ball at the Luxembourg, where she was engaged to go with her mother and her husband.

“There, at least,” she thought, “I shall speak a few words to him. It is my last chance, my last hope.”

But something better than what she had dared to hope for was in store for the young wife; not a few moments in a crowded ball-room, not a few insignificant words, spoken at hurried intervals, but hours, such as her most sanguine expectations had not ventured to look forward to. Hours, during which she was “to sit and draw his features on her heart’s table,” to “set aside relics for her idolatrous fancy to sanctify.”

At the close of a long formal dinner M. de Bonneval came into his wife’s room, looking worn and fatigued, and complaining of headache. The air was

sultry, the heat intense, the sky charged with heavy clouds. A storm was at hand, and the heavens looked :

“Dark as if the day of doom
Hung o’er nature’s shrinking head.”

“I cannot endure the thoughts of this ball. I am not in a humour for it,” he exclaimed, throwing his sword and his hat on one of the gilded chairs of the boudoir.

“Oh, then, pray let us give it up,” Judithe cried, with trembling eagerness. “Do let us spend this last evening alone. I can write an excuse. Grant me this favour, I implore you, my dear master.”

M. de Bonneval nodded assent, and threw himself full-length on the couch near the open window. Judithe hastened to countermand the carriage, to desire her doors to be

closed, and to inform her mother that she would not accompany her that evening to the Luxembourg. Then, quickly taking off her ball-dress, she put on a white muslin dressing-gown, and seated herself on a low chair by her husband's side. It was the first time that she had seen him in pain. He was suffering from a violent headache. Gently raising his head she supported it with cushions; bathed his brows in "Eau de Hongrie," that aromatic essence of which Madame de Sévigné makes honourable mention;¹ now and then uttering in a low voice some of those soothing words which women know how to address to the lords of creation, to those beings so strong in the midst of danger, but so easily overcome by illness. She grieved to see him suffer, but at the same time felt grateful to be

¹ Je m'énivre d'Eau de Hongrie.—*Madame de Sévigné's Letters.*

allowed to lavish upon him those tender attentions which love alone can devise and bestow.

“If I could only doze for a short time,” he said, “this headache would subside.”

“Shall I read to you, my cousin?” she timidly asked. Who knows but it might provoke sleep, and give you relief?”

“Do you ever sing?” he inquired, taking her hand in his.

“Sometimes, a little,” she answered, with a smile, and a slight blush.

“Oh, then, pray do so now. Your voice is so sweet in speaking that I am sure it must be charming when you sing.”

He kissed the little hand he held in his, and closed his eyes; those eyes that had become the light of her existence. Her singing was, indeed, sweet and true; both

clear and thrilling. The feelings that were lying deeply buried in her heart seemed at last to have found vent. They had not often been expressed in words. Ardently as she loved her husband, the reserve of her character, and her misgivings as to the degree of affection that he felt for her, had restrained its full expression. She had sought to repress rather than to give way to the impassioned tenderness of her nature, but on this evening the profound emotion of her soul lent an extraordinary pathos to her voice. M. de Bonneval lent a delighted ear to its sweet tones, which, mingling with the fitful breeze and the rustling of leaves—the harbingers of an approaching storm,—and with the perfumed emanations which rose from the garden, combined gradually to lull him into a profound repose.

The words of the ballad which his wife was singing were as simple as the melody

which accompanied them. It was one of those wild and mournful airs, to which the peasant women of the Roman Campagna adapt their national ditties. Rising and falling with a strange cadence, each verse ends by a long-sustained note, which lingers on the ear like the sound of the wind through the branches of a pine wood, or the ebbing of the wave when it dies away on the shore.

Judithe's song was as follows :

“I know a path that leads from the palace to the
cottage;

In that path there is an orange tree, an orange
tree in blossom.

The son of the lord of the palace loves those white
flowers ;

I wish I were one of those white flowers, that he
might wear me on his breast !

When the winter comes he goes away from us ;

He hurries to the city like the swallows to the
south,

But when the spring returns, then he also returns.

When the cyclamens appear, when the almond
trees put out their buds,

When our festivals begin, then he comes amongst
us again.

I would that it was spring; I would that there
were flowers,

Festivals and flowers at all times of the year.”¹

Long did those simple words, that wild
and plaintive air, remain haunting M. de
Bonneval's memory, like the faint echo of a
by-gone dream. In another land, amidst
other scenes, when the voice which was
lending them so much charm in that silent
twilight hour shall be hushed in the grave,
he will hear them once again.

Judithe sat a long time by the couch
where her husband was sleeping, gazing
intently on that face, every line of which
was stamped upon her heart.

¹ Imitated from one of the national popular
songs of Brittany, published by M. Hersart de la
Villemarqué.

Time was advancing; each hour that the clock struck a sharp pang shot through her heart. Midnight was at hand. A sudden noise in the anteroom startled the count from his repose, and his wife from her ecstasy of love and sorrow.

It was the Marquise de Bonneval, who was forcing her way in against the remonstrances of the servants, who had been desired not to admit anyone. She rushed into the room with frantic violence. The fact of her son's departure had become known to her, and she was almost beside herself with grief and anger. Not venturing to address her reproaches directly to him, for she loved him too passionately not to fear him also, she pointed to her daughter-in-law, and cried in an indignant voice:

“Do not be deceived, my son, by all the outward show of affection with which your wife endeavours to beguile you. I

know too well the falsehood of these pretences. Her object throughout has been to induce you to leave Paris. She has succeeded, and triumphs at this moment. Ah!" she wildly exclaimed, turning to Judithe, "you thought to conceal it from me! To-morrow would have dawned, and, ere the sun had risen on my misery my son would have been gone! You would have only mocked at my grief. What is it to you that your husband should seek death on the field of battle, that his mother's heart should break, so that you may be at liberty to follow your own course, to give yourself up to a life of pleasure; to imitate the bright examples of your sister-in-law—"

"Madame, enough of this," M. de Bonneval interrupted, in a peremptory manner. "You do not know what you are saying, or you would never venture to speak in this manner to one who merits

all our respect and affection. I will not suffer you so to insult her."

"Beware, my son, beware of the plausible appearances which she knows so well how to affect. She is deceiving you now, as she once deceived me. My eyes were cruelly opened, and I saw her conduct in its true light. You imagine, perhaps, that in your absence she will watch over your interests. She cares only for her own. She will sacrifice you to the interested views of her family!"

"This is intolerable," exclaimed M. de Bonneval, and, taking his wife by the hand, he led her into the next room, saying as he did so: "Leave us, I beseech you, my dear cousin. Do not expose yourself any longer to the insults of one whose only excuse must lie in a momentary aberration of mind. The day will come when my mother will deeply regret the conduct she has held towards you to-night."

Judithe gave him a look of gratitude and love; but as he closed the door upon her, she felt as if her heart would break.

A long and painful scene ensued between the mother and the son. It ended on her side by torrents of tears, hysterical sobs, and a last embrace, in which it seemed to her as if she was parting with life.

That farewell-interview was a death-blow to the unhappy woman's hopes. She foresaw that an endless separation was involved in it. Paler than death, but with the strength of passion supporting her feeble frame, she left the Hotel de Biron with despair in her heart, and on her lips a blessing which sounded wild as a curse.

When, at break of day, the Comte de Bonneval took leave of his wife, when he looked for the last time on

her sweet face, wan as a broken lily, and her hands as cold as marble were clasped in his, he gave some tokens of sensibility. As he folded her to his breast, and felt that loving heart throbbing against his own, a tear fell on her cheek, and mingled with hers. She thought, she believed, at that moment, that he loved her. Possibly he thought so himself; but once beyond the *barriere du Temple*—having parted with the Marquis de Biron and his sons, who had accompanied him a certain distance out of Paris,—fairly on his road to Vienna, on his way to all he cared about in life—liberty, amusement, adventure, and fame,—he drew a deep breath, waved his arms like a man suddenly relieved from a burthen, and snapped, in a single instant, the chain which had bound him for a few days. It fell off *his* careless heart, but was riven

in *hers*, of whom it might well be said that, "the iron had entered her soul," there to remain, and to sink deeper and deeper, even unto her dying day.

Fifth Chapter.

“Since you are not
To be diverted, sir, from what you purpose,
All arguments to stay you here are useless;
Go when you please, sir . . . my soul
Shall go along with you, and when you are
Circled with death and horror, seek and find you.
And then I will not leave a saint unsued to
For your protection. To tell you what
I will do in your absence, would show poorly;
My actions shall speak for me! 'twere to doubt you
To beg I may hear from you; where you are
You cannot live obscure, nor shall one post
By night or day, pass unexamined by me.

MASSINGER.

“With such delight I read your letters o’er,
Your presence only could have given me more.
Excuse my passion if it soar above
Your thought; no man can judge of woman’s love.
With business you, or pleasures may sustain
The pangs of absence, and divert the pain.
My wedded thoughts no other theme pursue,
I talk a hundred things, but all of you.”

COWLEY.

THE Countess de Bonneval’s brief period
of happiness—if the name, indeed, can be

applied to what had been chequered by so many fears, and clouded by so many misgivings—had come to a close.

The ten days of her married life are over; but not so the dream which is to follow them. She *had* dreamt for many previous years, and *lived* for the last three months; lived amidst all the feverish excitement of a passionate attachment; and *now* what remains to her—as she sits alone in the solitary room, which had seen her the day before kneeling by her husband's couch, and singing him to sleep—but another dream, longer and sadder than the first! For that was fraught with the wild freshness of morning; around the last, passion throws for a while a fitful light, but one by one its colours die away, even as the tints of the sunset sky when they fade into twilight. To watch the waning of that brightness, the gradual surrender of hope, the slow breaking of the truth on

the solitary heart, is the task before us; and it is one in which there is little need to have recourse to imagination, far less than in the earlier portions of this little work.

The materials are at hand, those simple, pathetic letters, which have been preserved by a strange accident, whilst those of so many more eminent, more highly gifted, and, above all, happier women have sunk into oblivion.

Truth takes the place of fiction. There is no need to invent words and to place them in her mouth; no occasion to guess at the feelings which agitate, the thoughts which occupy, her mind. With her own hand she has traced them, perfectly unconscious that those letters, written to one who appeared to value them so little, would be preserved, and one day brought to light as the most touching evidence of a woman's fervent love, enduring constancy, and life-long sorrow.

As we read the first of these artless compositions, we can picture to ourselves Judithe indulging in the luxury of grief, collecting about her every memorial of her husband's presence, pressing her lips to his portrait; we listen to the beatings of her heart, we see her tears falling on the paper on which she for the first time writes to "her dear master."

On the 18th of May, the morrow of his departure, she addresses him in the following manner. Alas! she had yet to learn that there are natures susceptible of emotion and at the same time totally without feeling:

FIRST LETTER.

"MY grief is so intense that I cannot help dwelling upon it, and yet I ought,

perhaps, to spare your feelings. I am persuaded that when persons love each other and are parted, it is vain to speak of consolation, and so I find it sweeter to indulge in everything that ministers to sadness. My dear master, I am overwhelmed with the thought of our separation; and the fact of your absence is continually present to me. I cannot wish you to suffer as much as I do. I would not, if I could, let you know how miserable I am, lest compassion should make you a sharer in what I would rather be alone to endure. A first trial of this sort, to one who had hitherto lived in a state of happy indifference, is very severe. I feel it to be so, and yet I cannot complain. Love is at once the cause and the cure of my grief, and the remembrance of my recent happiness supports me under the anguish of its loss. Nothing can exceed my wretchedness, and yet I cannot, for

a moment, regret my former peace of mind. There is not a single thing upon earth that I care about, except your love. I do trust, my dear master, that I shall always enjoy that blessing! At least, I know that I shall never have any other object but to please you, and that my fidelity to you will be as lasting as my attachment is ardent. What more can I say? How can I add to the strength of that expression? or find words with which to describe feelings so new to me that, while I yield unreservedly to their influence, I am quite at a loss how to define them? Explain then yourself, to your own heart, what mine feels, but knows not how to express, and tell yourself often that you are, of all men, the most tenderly beloved, the most esteemed, the most considered; for it is on these sentiments that my love is founded. Its only merit is its purity. Do not, I implore you, forget your poor little wife,

and remember that she is really in a state that merits compassion. I protest that, as far as regards myself, I would a thousand times rather die than live in this suspense. I know that glory will always be my most powerful rival; and yet, surely, when your life is in question, we ought to go shares in your heart; and while, in obedience to her dictates, you expose yourself to danger, for my sake you should take such precautions as her claims do not forbid! Think of all this, my own dear master,—that my only desire is your safety, my only happiness your love. I can talk of nothing but myself to-day, for I can think of nothing but you; everything else is intolerable to me. I embrace you with all my heart, and would willingly buy with half my life the happiness of being there where this letter is going.

“THE COUNTESS DE BONNEVAL.”

Unhappy as Judithe felt herself to be when she wrote this letter, she was not altogether wretched. There exist in this world sorrows that are not without sweetness; but we do not discern this fully till life has taught us by experience the bitterness of certain trials. She still could dream and scheme about the future, still picture to herself coming days of as much happiness as those that had just gone by, undisturbed by a sense of approaching separation. Her husband's last words were still ringing in her ears; the flowers which he had given her were unfaded; everything about her bore the impress of his presence; and so long as she was allowed to remain alone with her grief it was no unwelcome companion; it took the place of her absent master; not for worlds would she have been without it; and, as she sealed her letter, and pressed her lips upon the loved name that her hand had written, it would

have been difficult to decide if there was more of tender joy or of sweet melancholy in her tearful eyes.

But life has its thorns as well as its sorrows, and grief would lose half its acuteness if the world did not come and set its hoof upon our bruised and wearied feet. Judithe was soon to learn this truth. Two or three days after M. de Bonneval's departure she made an effort to rouse herself from her soothing solitude and to overcome the painful impression which her mother-in-law's conduct had produced upon her. She resolved to forget her ill-usage, to seek her with all the warmth of her former affection. It could not but be a comfort to her, she imagined, as she knew it would be to herself, to mingle their tears and talk for hours together, as they once had been wont to do, of the adored object of all their thoughts and affections.

"*His* mother," she kept murmuring in

a low voice, "*his* mother, who nursed him in infancy, who watched him at play, who gazed upon him year after year as he grew up to be the idol of her heart and the light of her eyes; she must love me that loves him so much; me, whose idol he is; me, his wife, who would die for him if I might;" and, thus communing with herself, she sent in her name, the name she was so lovingly proud of, and asked to be admitted to the room where the Marquise de Bonneval was shut up, nursing her despair and driving herself almost to madness by paroxysms of helpless fury.

An abrupt and absolute refusal was sent to her request for admittance, and when she timidly entreated, in a humble and touching note, that the marquise would name an hour when she might visit her, it was returned to her in a closed envelope, without a word of answer. She was weeping over this insult, with her face

buried in her hands, when the Marquise de Biron burst into her room, and sitting down opposite to her exclaimed :

“I hope, my daughter, that you will take care to let your husband know the infamous conduct of his mother towards you. I know that you carry your ideas of patience under injury to the most extravagant point, but there are limits to endurance. I hear she shuts her door against you. Promise me that you will complain to M. de Bonneval, this very day, of this outrageous behavior, or I will write to him myself on the subject.”

Judithe raised her eyes, and said :

“I promise you that I will, dearest mother ;” and then, with a full heart and a thoughtful brow, she accompanied Madame de Biron to the bedside of the Duc de Lauzun, who was very ill at that moment, but who exclaimed, as she entered the room :

“Welcome, fair Andromache, my Hector’s wife;” and, without paying the slightest attention to his niece, whose society he could not endure, insisted on making her daughter sit by his bedside and loading her with commissions for her husband.

As she was leaving his room she met the Vicomte de Gontaut, who whispered to her as he passed :

“The Abbé Dubois tells me that the mother of the Gracchi writes by every messenger to your hero, my dear sister, to describe you as a female Machiavelli, an arch deceiver, a—but I have not time to repeat all the compliments she pays you. I hope you are at last disenchanted of that old Medusa;” and he sprang up the flight of steps, humming a lively tune.

Judithe went home, locked her door, and, with her head resting on her hands, remained absorbed for a long time in painful reflections ; till, rousing herself at last, from

her reverie, she wrote the following letter, —so different from the last. A drop of bitterness had fallen into the crystal cup of her first pure sorrow. Restraint is visible in every line. She no longer ventures to give way to the full expression of her feelings. If his mother's accusations should have made M. de Bonneval think her deceitful, how can she ever speak to him again of her love? On his answer will depend all her future peace of mind. She longs for it, pines for it; and with the ingenuousness of a loving and anxious heart, she takes occasion from the Duc de Lauzun's messages to entreat against too long a delay in that reply.

SECOND LETTER.

“I do not suppose that many instances could be found of such strange conduct as your mother’s towards me. I do not wish to examine into its cause, which my respect for her forbids. I feel too deeply the duty I owe you in her person. Feeling myself guiltless of the faults she lays to my charge, it makes me very unhappy to be obliged to think her unjust, and her behaviour to me unkind. She possesses, however, one quality so sacred in my eyes that nothing shall ever induce me to utter a single word of recrimination. You will always find me as anxious to keep silence on that subject as she, alas! has been to injure me in your estimation. But she has

chosen, I grieve to think, a favourable opportunity for effecting her purpose. You have seen but little of me. Can I hope that the impressions you have derived from only ten days' intercourse, will prevail against the testimony of a person who has known me for years, and who yet knows me so little. I must tell you, my dear cousin, that M. de Lauzun has been very ill. A cold is no slight ailment at his age. He has not been, however, in absolute danger. He bids me tell you that he is highly gratified at the attachment you show him. He has a very great affection for you. He wishes you to tell Prince Eugene that he honours and respects him beyond any other person in the world, and that he hopes, if, indeed, such a thing be possible, that his next campaign may be still more glorious than the last. *Pray* do not forget to give his message, and to send some answer to it in your next letter.

He is very particular as regards punctuality, and will be continually asking me if I have heard from you, and what notice you have taken of his message."

Several days elapsed, and lengthened into weeks, before Judithe received this much-desired reply. At last it came, and though she might have wished, perhaps, that its tone had been less playful, and its expressions of affection and confidence more earnest, she was, nevertheless, reassured as to the groundless nature of her fears with regard to her mother-in-law's efforts to calumniate her character and her conduct.

M. de Bonneval simply laughed at her apprehensions, turned into ridicule what he termed his mother's monomania, and assured his wife that she might rest perfectly contented on that point. His esteem

for her would never be shaken by such a tissue of absurdities as was contained in the marquise's letters. He habitually consigned them to the flames, without taking the trouble to read them; an excellent remedy, he added, against most of the troubles of life.

The tone of this letter did not quite harmonise with the feelings of the person it was addressed to; still it relieved her anxiety, and put an end, at once, to all the fears she had entertained. But other terrors were soon to be awakened in her mind by the intelligence that the imperial army had entered upon the Turkish campaign.

The Comte de Bonneval had been named General of Infantry, and had at once proceeded to the seat of war. From that moment his letters become fewer and shorter. If he writes at all it is only a few hurried lines, which, from time to time,

serve to relieve his wife's harassing apprehensions.

The month of July, with its almost tropical heat in Paris, had turned the city into one vast furnace; the air was stifling, the pavement burning. Not even at night did a breath of air cool the sultry streets, or fan the fevered brow. Judithe's cheeks were growing every day more pale, her step more languid, her eyes less bright.

One morning the Vicomtesse de Gontaut entered her room, at an early hour, and found her sitting at her writing-table, with a sad and abstracted countenance.

"My little sister," she exclaimed, "you will be pleased at once to put aside your occupations, whatever they may be, and prepare to accompany me (my carriage is at the door) to Puteaux, where my brother expects us to-day. M. de Gontaut condescends to give us the pleasure of

his society. Paris is too much at this moment even for *his* nerves to endure. He pleads guilty to the vapours. What, no answer but a blush and a shake of the head? Madame la Comtesse de Bonneval, I will take no denial. Have you ever found it possible to gainsay me when I have been bent on carrying my point? I assure you that it is not for nothing that I am called one of the 'wild ones of the Court.' I am capable of having you gagged, bound, blindfolded, carried off this very minute, and my six *cavalieri serventi* shall ride by the carriage-door, and point their pistols at your wicked little head."

Judithe smiled, and again shook the head thus stigmatised:

"My dear sister, you are too kind, but—"

"But, what?"

"I cannot leave Paris just now."

“And why so, may I ask?”

“Because I get my letters sooner here than I should in the country.”

“Merciful heavens! my dear child, I protest that you remind me of one of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's heroines. I can assure you that this conjugal passion of yours is not at all in keeping with the times and the country we live in. Did I not take all the pains in the world to warn you against such a mistake as that of losing your heart to your husband?”

“Indeed, you did, my dear sister. Your conscience may be quite easy on that point,” Judithe answered, with a smile; “but wilful people must have their way you know, or, as M. de Lauzun's Scotch valet mutters in his jargon, ‘He who will to Currah maun to Currah,’ a phrase which seems to console him under all the trials to which our dear uncle's eccentricities daily expose him.”

“Well, in that case, my sweet obstinate, ‘as I *will* to Puteaux I *maun* to Puteaux,’ and by all the wills and the mauns ever uttered by barbarous islanders, you shall go there also. Come, summon your handmaids. Put up all the *menu* baggage that you carry about with you, and yield to your Adélaïde’s entreaties;” as she spoke Madame de Gontaut threw her arms fondly round Judithe’s neck, and then whispered in her ear: “and on the courier days, my carriage and my servants will be at your orders. Will that satisfy you, madame la comtesse? You really have no excuse for persisting in your refusal.”

Subdued by her sister-in-law’s kindness, Judithe consented to accompany her, and on the evening of that day she found herself established in the Duc de Guiche’s lovely villa, surrounded by affectionate friends and relations, soothed by the sight of nature in her most luxuriant season,

and counting the while the moments that must intervene, till, on the dusky high-road, under the burning sun, she will be hurrying to Paris, in order to receive an hour or too sooner a letter that will not arrive; for from the 25th of June to the 6th of August not one line came to allay her tormenting anxiety. On the eve of that breathless, feverish, bootless journey, she wrote the following letter:

THIRD LETTER.

“I HAVE been staying, for the last three days, at the Duc de Guiche’s, my dear cousin, with M. and Madame de Gontaut. I brought a heavy heart into this solitude, for though I am well aware that you are

indolent, and might easily allow one or two courier-days to go by without writing, yet how can I subdue my anxiety when for three whole weeks I have not heard from you? All the Frenchmen in your army are so exact in writing, that it adds to my disquietude, as you cannot surely be the only one amongst them unable to find a moment just to mention in what state you are? Do ask M. Prescher to write to me one line only, to tell me if your health is good. You do not know what it is to love, my dear cousin, if you neglect to afford me even that amount of consolation. Would it not make you uneasy if I was to be so long without writing? Think, then, what I have to go through; I, who love you far, far more than you love me! I know you to be every day exposed to the greatest dangers; nothing but your letters can keep me from falling into despair, and yet you

deny me that only comfort! I am in a most wretched state of mind; at one moment inclined to murmur against your cruelty, and at others accounting for your silence by suppositions that make me perfectly miserable. Sometimes I tell myself that such a heart as mine is a great drawback to the happiness of life; that it is on many accounts a very inconvenient possession. I go further, my dear master; I am almost afraid, that it may become, through its excessive tenderness, burdensome to others. I suppose, unjust as this would be, that those who love as I do, must always have that fear before their eyes. Not that there exist, I fancy, many instances of so devoted an affection, and indeed it is better perhaps that it should be so, for such feelings are very apt to be unrequited. But as I have not as yet made that painful experience, I allow full scope to the ardour of an at-

tachment which duty and inclination have combined to strengthen. If it should be indeed your fault that I do not hear from you, it is but fair that you should be visited with the penalty of reading my complaints. My mother says that she is writing on purpose to scold you. She, my father, and myself sit in judgment on your offences and pass severe sentences upon you; but when I am left to myself I can do nothing but weep, and imagine a thousand misfortunes. I am going back to Paris, to-morrow, that I may receive your letter (if there is one for me) a few moments sooner. M. and Madame de Gontaut are very angry with you. So are all who love you most. Our charming sister-in-law is so accustomed to receive homage, that she cannot understand any neglect as to attentions. I cannot end my letter, my dear cousin, without saying that I am quite persuaded that there is no man

in the whole world so devotedly loved as you are. If this is not agreeable to you, prepare your soul for patience, for I am equally certain that my affection will be eternal. I tenderly embrace you."

Twice that week Judithe went to Paris, and twice she returned to Puteaux, with an aching heart, for each time she had vainly spent tedious hours at the Hotel de Biron, wandering about the empty rooms, and watching the entrance-door with sickening impatience.

When on the last occasion her messenger came in sight, the colour forsook her cheeks, and she was forced to sit down, so great was the trembling of her limbs.

"There are no letters, madame la comtesse."

"Put the horses to," she faintly said, turning away that the footman might not

see the big tears rolling down her cheek.

Oh, it is heart-breaking work to love, to wait, to hope, and to be disappointed, but still more heart-breaking, perhaps, to have outlived love and hope, expectation and fear!

At her return to Puteaux, on the 25th of July, the Duc de Guiche met her at the door, and giving her his hand to lead her to her apartment, he said:

“M. de Croizot has been here this morning; he has just had a letter from his son from the Austrian camp; he tells him M. de Bonneval is in excellent health, full of life and spirits, as usual the gayest of the gay, as well as the bravest of the brave. But you, madame, must have doubtless received a budget of letters, and can give us the most recent accounts of your gallant husband’s welfare.”

Judithe murmured a few unintelligible

words, and hurried into her apartment. There, falling on her knees, she exclaimed :

“Thank God! he is well;” and then there rose up in her throat a choking sensation; the full sense of his neglect suddenly came upon her. “Was it thus she was to be treated? Was this the reward of her love? So soon after their marriage, so soon after their parting, not to vouchsafe an answer to her letters! It was more than she could bear!”

Alas! how little we know what we *can* bear, what we *shall* have to bear. The *first* sharpness of a trial takes us by surprise, and the soul rebels at the outset against what it must gradually learn to endure.

Judithe seized a sheet of paper, and wrote upon it these few lines, the only ones in which she ever expressed a feeling of irritation :

FOURTH LETTER.

“MY anxiety increases every day, as does also your remissness. I torment myself with the same perseverance with which you neglect me. As I cannot work a change in my nature I must endeavour to conform myself to what I am compelled to hope is your system, that is, to love without giving the object of your love the slightest token of it, unless, indeed, a profound silence is, in your opinion, a proof of affection. These views are so singular that you should really have given me notice of them, in order that so extraordinary an effect should not have taken me by surprise.”

No sooner had this letter gone than the tender, loving heart of the poor little wife

grieved over it. Fain would she have recalled those lines which had been dictated by wounded sensibility, rather than by the passionate affection which was the predominant feeling of her soul. She shed torrents of tears as she pictured to herself that M. de Bonneval might possibly receive them when he was ill or tired, wounded perhaps, or even dying, far from her, far from home, far from sympathy or consolation. She reproached herself bitterly for what she called her harshness, and made a resolution, which she never once swerved from, and that was for ever after to refrain from addressing to him a single reproach, and to use in her letters to him none but tender, affectionate, or playful expressions.

Meanwhile she returned to Paris. There her only thought, her only occupation, was to seek out such persons as had friends or relations in the Imperial Army, to glean here and there some word, some pass-

ing expression, some report which conveyed to her a knowledge of the state of affairs in Hungary, or some assurance that her husband was alive and well.

He wrote to her once or twice during the month of August, but these letters were short and unsatisfactory, and now two couriers have again arrived without bringing her even that small amount of consolation.

Towards the end of that month she writes as follows :

FIFTH LETTER.

“I HAVE not heard from you by the two last couriers, my dear cousin. It is indeed a great blessing for me that the Frenchmen in your army have not forgotten

their native country. If it was not for the occasional tidings I gather from their letters I should be in continual terrors about your life and your health, your present position giving me ample reason to tremble for both. If you loved me you would, I think, understand that whilst my worst fears are relieved by the intelligence I obtain from strangers, there is another kind of uneasiness, which they cannot assuage; but as it does not occur to you to spare me this suffering, I conclude that you are ignorant of its nature. As my reproaches might end by wearying you, I will say no more on that subject, and, indeed, I see very little use in it. I am incessantly occupied in sending to all the persons who have relations in Hungary to get from them whatever news I can. I have a great resource in M. de la Blard. You had written to him on the 2nd of July, and your last letter to me was sent on

the 25th of June. There are many persons here in correspondence with your part of the world. M. Croizot hears very often from his son, and I make up a great deal to him, because in those letters you are often mentioned. You will think me very foolish, but I love you, and the sacred tie that binds us sanctions and heightens my attachment. Good bye, my dear cousin; do care a little for her who never will care for anybody but you; my heart is yours, and yours alone, for ever. The Chevalier de Foutanges sends you his best compliments. I am really very fond of him. He is a very good sort of man. He says that your silence puts him in a passion; and as to M. de Lauzun, he will quite hate you if it goes on. He sends you his kindest love; so do also Madame de Lauzun and the Abbé, who thinks his nuptial benediction has not been over and above happy."

A few days after Judithe had written this letter, her father came up to her one evening when the family were assembled in the drawing-room, and leaning on the back of her chair, he said :

“I have heard, to-day, from your husband, Madame de Bonneval; he bids me tell you that he puts off writing to you until he has a letter of yours to answer.”

The young countess kept her eyes fixed on the ground.

“Is he well?” she said, in a low voice.

“Perfectly so, I imagine,” replied M. de Biron. “But how comes it that you are so idle about writing? We all imagined that those many hours which you steal from our society were spent in preparing heavy packets for the Austrian courier; and here is M. le comte, your husband,

complaining of your silence ? ” M. de Biron, as he said those words, fondly patted his daughter’s cheek. She looked at him with such a sweet, sad smile, that the father’s heart within him was moved. He took her hand in his. It was cold and trembling. “Judithe, my foolish child,” he began ; but she could not stay ; one pressure of his hand, one more loving look she gave him, and then left the room ; and now in the silence of her own she communes with herself.

“Oh, that I could think ! that I could believe ! that not one of my poor letters had ever reached him ! He waits to write till he has heard from *me* ; from me, who have written every week, and counted the minutes till I dared to write again ; so fearful of wearying him that it was only on the appointed days that I ventured to put pen to paper, and now he does not write to me because I do not write

to him often enough! So be it. I am the one in fault. Oh, that it might be so! Fain would I believe that *he* thought it. But I am sick at heart. My head aches. Oh, for a breath of the fresh air that blows over the Landes of Gascony. I wonder if Lafond still lives!"

"A traitor is a traitor, all the world over." She did not utter those last words, but they darted through her mind like a shot. She shrunk from her own thought as if it had been a whisper from the evil one. She wound herself up again to hope, to believe, to trust; but the spirit of despondency had stolen into her heart, and it throws a cold chill into every line of this letter:

SIXTH LETTER.

“WE go upon quite different principles, my dear cousin. To punish me for my supposed inexactitude in writing, you leave off writing yourself, whilst I, on the contrary, do nothing but send letter after letter to complain of your silence. These opposite ways of acting may both proceed from affection, but I think mine is the most natural mode of evincing it. I cannot understand how you fail to receive my letters, for since you have been away, I have not let a single week go by without writing, grieving all the while that from fear of wearying you, I felt myself obliged not to do so oftener, for I could not bear that you should find my tender-

ness oppressive. I must say, however, that my love is of a nature that ought to meet with a return, which I am always living in hopes of. My feelings are severely tried at this moment, for I experience nothing but fears, disquietude, and utter discouragement. I really can hardly be said to exist. The sacrifice of half my life would not be too high a price to pay, could I be spared during the remainder the cruel pangs I have to endure. I am really in a most miserable state of mind; but I had rather not intrude my sufferings upon you. God forbid that I should occasion you the least uneasiness."

Alas! for the fruitless struggle carried on by that devoted heart! seeking in vain to lull its anxieties, and to attribute to the object of her passionate affection some of

the feelings which so effectually mar its own peace. Her imagination ever at work to invoke a phantom of its own creation, and then striving to believe in its reality.

Sixth Chapter.

“Had you seen him,
How in one bloody scene he did discharge
The parts of a commander and a soldier,
Wise in direction, bold in execution,
You would have said, great Cæsar’s self excepted,
The world yields not his equal.”

MASSINGER.

“Oh, happy shades, to me unblest,
Friendly to peace, but not to me!
How ill the scene that affords rest
And hearts that cannot rest agree!
For fixed unutterable care
Foregoes not what she feels within,
Shows the same sadness everywhere,
And slights the season and the scene.”

COWPER.

THERE was still one brilliant and happy moment in store for the young Countess de Bonneval; one of those moments such as

she had often pictured to herself in bygone days, and the brightness of which had deluded her young mind into the fancy which had, by degrees, grown into a passion. She had willingly bartered for that vision the peace of her whole life. She had rejoiced at the tie which had bound her to one around whom a false halo of glory threw a deceitful light. One hour of such earthly joy as she had dreamed of in childhood, and looked forward to in youth, was now to be granted to her. It was preceded by some hours of intense anxiety. It was the lightening flash athwart a gloomy sky.

She had often professed not to care for happiness, and God took her at her word. What she *had* sought was for one short instant vouchsafed, and not too dearly bought did she deem it at the price of previous tears and of subsequent misery. As long as it was given her to be proud of

her husband, she thought little of her own wrongs.

On the 28th of September, 1721, Judithe was spending some hours at the Duc de Lauzun's villa, at Passy. She was sitting by his side when young de Gêvres came in, and immediately began :

“The Elector of Bavaria's courier has arrived. There has been a tremendous action fought before Belgrade. Madame la duchesse is in ecstasies. The Comte de Charolais is safe.”

Pale as a sheet, Judithe tried to speak, but her voice failed her. Madame de Lauzun seized her hand, and cried :

“Anyone else mentioned in the letters?”

“Not a soul,” answered young de Gêvres, and then recollecting Madame de Bonneval's presence, he added : “If any great misfortune had happened to people of note, the courier must have heard of it.”

Judithe kissed her uncle's hand, and

hurried into her carriage, which was at the door. She returned to Paris, and spent long weary hours, now on her knees in her oratory, now in the drawing-room, where some of the family were going in and out, now watching at the window for the return of the servant whom she had sent for news to the Hotel du Maine. The anguish of suspense, the sickening delay, the sympathy of some, the indifference of others, seemed alike to torture her. Slowly the hours went by. The sun set, and rose again, and not once had her eyes closed themselves that long and weary night. It was noon of the next day, and she was still watching, still praying, if, indeed, clasped hands and wild words—uttered at intervals, more like a charm than a prayer—can be called by that name. Then there was the step of a horse galloping into the court, and her young brother, a youth of fifteen, who had always dearly loved her, sprung from the

saddle, and bounded up the stairs into the room, and to his sister's side in one minute.

“A letter for you,” he cried, and into the hands of the trembling wife he placed what for a while made up to her for all she had suffered, for all she had yet to suffer. He was alive, he was well, he had written to her on the day of that terrible battle,—the adored husband, whose handwriting she had so pined to see again. She could not take her eyes off the paper where, with that very hand which had performed heroic feats of valour, he had traced a few hurried lines to assure her of his safety, to tell her of his successes; and great was the glory he had gained on that day.

It was impossible to overrate the importance of the victory, or the share which M. de Bonneval had had in securing it to the Imperial Army. High as his reputation had

hitherto been, no exploits he had ever performed, had even approached to those he accomplished on this occasion. The troops which he commanded had borne the brunt of the battle; his skill and coolness were conspicuous in the attack; his dauntless courage carried everything before him. Belgrade was about to surrender. The Turks were suing for peace.

The name of the successful hero was in every mouth. Nothing was spoken of in Paris but the triumph he had achieved; Judithe was surrounded in a moment by friends who wished her joy of this glorious news, by relations who claimed to share in her happiness, as they had done in her fears; who kept assuring her that she might well be proud of the name she bore, of the hero on whom her hand and her heart had been bestowed.

No words can describe the exultation, the joy, the deep emotion of the young countess;

her eyes were sparkling with animation, her cheeks glowing, her whole manner changed. Who could have recognised in her the pale drooping creature, who, a few days ago was sadly wandering in the deserted rooms of the Hotel de Biron.

There was to be a great reception that night at the Duchesse du Maine's, and Judithe, who, since her husband's departure had kept out of the way of all society, and felt it a burthen to dress or to converse, was but too ready to make her appearance that night, there where her lord's praises would be in every mouth, now that the idol of her heart was for the moment the idol of the public.

If she had never been thought beautiful before, she would have been deemed so that evening. In her eyes there was an enthusiasm, which shone through their dreamy depths like the sun through a transparent mist. If there was pride in

her glance, it was tempered by a tenderness that seemed to yearn for sympathy. As person after person came up to her with high-flown congratulations, and poured into her ears the most flattering compliments, she blushed so sweetly, she looked up so gratefully ! They call *her* hero the hero of Belgrade, the bulwark of Christendom, the support of the empire, the pride of France. She hears these words, she trembles with delight, she presses against her bosom the letters she has that day received, and which she wears next her heart. Ah, what reck's she in that hour of the anguish of suspense, the cold chill of disappointment, of the fears she had felt, the hopes she had renounced. She has been thought of by him in his hour of glory, and this will strengthen her to bear months and years of solitary trial.

Not a relation or a friend, not a royal personage or a distinguished character, but

pays her a tribute of homage, and lays at the feet of the young wife the incense which she covets for the loved one of her heart.

As she sits down to write to him the next day her hand trembles with joy, more than it ever did with fear, and the blush on her cheek has deepened into a hectic flush.

SEVENTH LETTER.

“How difficult it is, my dear cousin, to a heart overflowing with tenderness, to speak of the various emotions which have been agitating it for some time past. I have gone through the extremes of suffering and of joy, and followed you through every change of circumstance with feelings

which I have not been able to moderate. I trembled for your life, and gave myself up to the wildest fears. I am now reassured for the present, and a little more at peace. But, oh, what happiness it is to add the joy of your triumph to the knowledge of your safety, which has hitherto been, I confess, the only thing I have thought of. Everybody says that this victory is principally due to you. I do not think that I am much given to vanity, but it would be quite impossible not to be proud of what is said about you just now. I cannot go a single step without hearing you praised, and in a way which touches my feelings and goes straight to my heart. To be sure it is but fair that I should derive some advantage from that glory which is purchased at so dear a price, as far as I am concerned, robbing me, as it does, of all peace and tranquility. For as long as you are engaged in war I can never hope

that you will be even commonly prudent, or otherwise than recklessly brave. You think of nothing but leading others to victory, and ruthlessly expose that precious life which does not now belong to you alone. I cannot think with patience of all that the Elector of Bavaria has made us suffer. The courier which he sent to madame la duchesse arrived twenty-four hours before the Duc du Maine's messenger. In his anxiety to set her mind at rest about the Comte de Charolais he threw everybody into agonies of suspense, as he had not taken the trouble to ascertain if any persons of note had been killed or wounded. Nothing can describe the agonies I went through till the moment when I received your letter,—I had rather not dwell upon it. Words, besides, would be weak to render such impressions, and for the same reason I will not speak of the delight which your letter gave me.

Only let me assure you, my dearest master, that I shall never, as long as I live, forget your kindness in writing to me at a moment when nothing but the sight of your handwriting could have saved me from utter despair. If you could know all the gratitude I feel for your having thought of me at such a moment! if you could read my heart, you would, I think, be pleased to see how your kindness has touched it to the quick, and awakened in it the most grateful emotions. I should like to hear of your Belgrade being taken. Then I should be satisfied. I cannot help feeling still a little uneasy. It must be owned that we purchase dearly the gift of sensibility. A few moments of intense happiness are bought at the cost of very severe sufferings. Not that I should desire to possess a heart less capable of affection. Such as it is, mine is altogether devoted to you, and I would, if I could, enlarge it,

in order to love you still more, if that was possible. As it is at present constituted, nothing more ardent or more exclusive can be conceived than its feelings; and I know by every aspiration and emotion of my soul that I was born to love you, and that I shall love you to my life's end. Nothing can be more certain than this. I am, of course, bound to do so, but inclination is so much on the same side that it quite outstrips the claims of duty. If you choose it, my dear master, you can make me the happiest person upon earth. Your affection is all I care for. I have no other thought, no other wish, and I shall never trouble myself about anything else. My mother assists us in our affairs in the kindest manner possible. She is writing to you to-day, so that I need not speak to you of her joy, and of her previous anxiety, which were, nevertheless, exceedingly touching. I used to think that I loved my family

on account of their goodness to me, but I now quite overlook that cause of gratitude in my sense of their affection for you. There is no room left in my heart for any feeling independent of you, even when there exists a just and previous claim to my attachment. Madame de Nogent insists on my saying all sorts of flattering things to you from her. She takes the most lively interest in your successes, and though she had expected to hear her grandson warmly praised, her anticipations have been exceeded by the universal enthusiasm which the recent events have excited. M. le Duc du Maine came up to me yesterday, when I was at his house, and said all the finest things in the world about you. M. and Madame de Lauzun send their warm congratulations on your safety, and are enchanted at what everybody writes from the camp, and at all that the page has related of your exploits. There is not

a single Biron who does not insist on my making particular mention of him or of her, and who does not scold me beforehand for omitting any of the compliments they are so anxious to pay you."

Satisfied as to her husband's safety, and soothed by the thought that he had written to her on that memorable day, the Countess de Bonneval removed to Choisy, her brother's country-house.

The beautiful month of October, so bright and clear in the sunny climate of France, was in its glory. The vintage just gathered in, the trees displaying their gorgeous autumnal foliage, the air so still, the sky so blue.

Judithe was surrounded by her family, by her friends ; everything around her was gay and smiling ; she was in "the loveliest spot in the world," as she herself describes

it; and yet, as she thought of the Abbey garden at Saintes and the chapel of the nuns, a deep melancholy stole over her.

The intense excitement which she had felt when the news of the Battle of Belgrade had reached Paris having subsided, she was less anxious and agitated than she had been, but totally unable to take part in the gaiety of that family circle which had once been so dear to her.

Her old friend M. de Bonrepos was more devoted than ever. His attachment to her had assumed a touching character. The most painful compassion was mixed with it. She had ceased now to resent this, though for worlds she would not have owned that her fate was not an enviable one. As in former days, he tried by every means in his power to amuse her, to win from her a smile. He sometimes succeeded, but, somehow, there was very little that was cheering in those smiles. He

would almost rather have seen her weep than smile in that strange new way. He used to watch her slowly wandering under the old trees of Choisy, with a languid step and a listless manner, and sighed as he thought of the gay animated girl that trod so lightly a year or two ago amongst the heather and the gorse in the Landes of Gascony.

They played at chess, as at Biron, but she was often absent, and sometimes altogether forgot what she was about. The old man's eyes were seen to fill with tears on these occasions. The thoughts of both would carry them far from the game, far from France; but different were the sentiments which filled their minds at those moments. The young wife absorbed in an impassioned reverie; the old man muttering a curse on the heartless object of that unrequited passion.

It is playfully that she alludes to M. de

Bonrepos' devotion in her next letter to her husband. She jests about the depth and the ardour of his affection ; but, meanwhile, is not sorry that M. de Bonneval should know that others have cared for her whom he so neglects.

One evening Madame de Gontaut threw her arms round her neck, and looking into her eyes, she cried :

“Tears, dreams, sighs ; oh, my love, what sad work this is ! Did not I tell you what a mistake it is to give way to that horrid thing *love* ? I assure you, my dear, that I would rather be bitten by a mad dog than fall a prey to that malady. You, so clever, so good, our wise little Silence, weeping your eyes out, because a tiresome man, with a campaign to carry on and two armies in the field, does not write every week ! Oh, I should like to cut off at one blow the heads of all the men in the world.”

“I am afraid you would think it a very tiresome world the next day, dear Adélaïde. No more hearts to wound, no more heads to turn!” and Judithe smiled with something of her former gaiety.

“By the way, my dear love,” exclaimed the vicomtesse, “what detained you so long yesterday, at the Princesse de Conti’s? We waited for you a long while, and then agreed to abandon you to your fate. M. d’Aumont came to the carriage-door, and announced that Madame la Comtesse de Bonneval could not leave at present her royal highness’ *salon*, that she would follow us later in her own carriage. What sudden fancy possessed you for the society of that charming royal dwarf, by a few inches shorter, and not half so clever as Madame la Duchesse du Maine?”

“Did you not observe an arrival, just as you were about to depart, my dear sister?”

“An arrival? Oh, I now remember. Your worthy brother-in-law, Phœbus! What a name! but what of that? under any other name he would bore us as much.”

“I will not allow you to laugh at him, Adélaïde.”

“Can you really believe he is your husband’s brother, my dear?”

“If I did not should I have spent two long hours in—”

“In taking the words out of his mouth to try and make them appear sensible, if not refined, and by your graceful curtseys effacing the effect of mesdames’, your new relations, awkwardness. I admit it. The argument is conclusive. But, my love, while I admire your heroic exertions, I must protest against your principle. ‘Love me love my dog’ I may admit as a reasonable axiom—but provincial kindred! Heaven defend us from such.”

“I do not think Heaven need interfere

in your behalf, my dear Adélaïde. One of your scornful glances would be enough to annihilate any such intruders; but if you knew what it is to love, which you do not, you would understand that one cannot allow those who bear the name most dear to one in the world to be exposed to ridicule."

"Well, I suppose, for your sake then we must treat with respect the Marquis de Bonneval; though for my part I think the Austrian Hulans would have done you good service if they had run him through the body at the Battle of Turin; it must be confessed that your husband interfered most injudiciously to prevent that desirable event."

"You are incorrigible, Madame de Gontaut," Judithe said, with a half smile, which passed over her face for an instant, and then left it to its now habitually pensive expression. There was something more

affecting in her efforts at cheerfulness than even in her melancholy. Her features had assumed a touching expression which went to the hearts of those who loved her.

From Choisy she writes thus, on the 1st of October :

EIGHTH LETTER.

“I AM here, my dear cousin, in the most lovely spot in the world, and surrounded by the most agreeable society. I ought to be contented in this place, but in the midst of everything that would formerly have made me happy I feel constant uneasiness. I am obliged to own to myself that it would cost me infinitely less to part from all those I once cared about, and that I still dearly love, than it does to be separated from my dear master. I am with my

father, my mother, Madame de Gontaut, for whom I have an affection which I had hitherto imagined to be such that no other attachment could be compared to it, but now I am forced to admit that there is another kind of feeling, more exclusive in its nature, and to which all others are sacrificed. I did not intend to write to you to-day, but the messenger, who is just arrived from Paris, leaves again so opportunely that I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of conversing with you for a few moments. My heart is always so inclined, and my mind so much in accordance with it, that it would seek its own satisfaction in this correspondence if it could separate its interests from those of an affection which absorbs all my faculties. Whether I write or not my thoughts are never for one moment occupied with anything but you. Yesterday your brother came, with your sister-in-law and your niece, to pay his

respects to the Princesse de Conti. They certainly have nothing of the air of the Court about them, and I was afraid of leaving your brother alone for a single moment, for I felt when he was betraying his awkwardness and his narrowness of mind that he stood in too close a relationship to you to allow him to be slighted or turned into ridicule. M. de Bonrepos spends his life in a state of continual depression; for if he is away from me I am told that his melancholy is extreme, and when in my company he can hardly restrain his tears. Can you account, my dear cousin, for so profound an affection? Does not this extraordinary passion give you a little uneasiness? I assure you that my virtue is very much touched by it, and in danger of being shaken. I hope my love for you will prove the strongest. I wish I could answer for it, but I really cannot pledge myself on that point. In

the meantime I embrace you with all my heart, and promise you an inviolable fidelity, proof against all possible seductions, saving always that of M. de Bonrepos."

Seventh Chapter.

“Ah, blind confiding Love! what loyal heart
 But pours deep pity's tears thy woes upon,
 When late conviction forces thee to part
 With all the sacred treasures once thine own!
 Like drops of burning lead, that one by one
 Fall on a martyr's breast, when proofs conspire,
 Still the poor sufferer stifles tear and groan,
 Hugs self-deceit, and hopes with vain desire,
 Till angels weep to see the flickering flame expire.”

LADY NORTHAMPTON.

WHEN the winter came on, Madame de Bonneval returned to Paris, and her existence assumed a form which admitted of few variations, and which harmonised with the tone of her mind and of her feelings.

She seldom left the retired apartment in which were collected all the memorials of that brief moment of her life, on the recollection of which her whole existence seemed to hang.

She went into society only at rare intervals, when it so happened that the news from Hungary suggested to her the desire of hearing her husband spoken of, and his achievements extolled. Almost every evening, however, a certain number of elderly military men assembled in the little *salon* of the young countess, and conversed on the subjects which alone had any interest for her—the events of the war, the chances of peace, the political circumstances which, directly or indirectly, might have an effect on M. de Bonneval's interests and prospects.

He was then at the height of his reputation, and it was doubtless a great consolation to his neglected wife to hear the flattering things that were said of him; to

see her own family proud of his exploits, and to convey to him the repeated expressions of regard and esteem which they charged her to convey to the successful general.

In Judithe's drawing-room was constantly to be seen a little boy, one of her nephews, to whom the Comte de Bonneval had taken a great fancy during his stay in Paris. The child used to ask ten times a day to see his uncle's picture, and was each time rewarded by a long, lingering kiss impressed on his fair brow or on his blooming cheek; and when, with childish fondness, he hugged his "good uncle's" portrait, he was himself folded to a heart that had few joys, but a wonderful power of loving, and a great sense of even the slightest consolations. Many were the innocent stratagems employed to make the little fellow utter the name that she was ever watching to hear, ever listening for, as if its very sound

had the power for an instant to allay the long sickness of hope deferred.

One of her brothers, the Marquis de Gontaut, was tenderly attached to her; he understood her character better than most of the members of his family. His own disposition was unworldly, and he sought in her company and in her affection what society at that time could not afford. He did not care for riches, and hated courts. He was very young, but like her he had an instinctive sense of something beyond the frivolities that surrounded him. He liked to watch her expressive countenance and "read the story in her face." He was the confidant of many, though not of *all*, her thoughts. Her wrongs, to no one human being did she ever allude to. There were, however, some touching little secrets between them.

That noble family, which by its name and descent stood foremost amongst the aristo-

cracy of France, was at that time poor, and Judithe, the portionless daughter of the Birons, and the neglected wife of a not ungenerous but selfish and careless man, had but little of this world's possessions to boast of.

By the sick beds, which she visited in secret, in the poor homes, where, early in the morning or late at night she stole in silence, when her purse was empty, her slight resources exhausted, her young brother would supply from *his* the means of comforting many an aching heart, relieving many a suffering spirit.

Good old Madame Dupuis had sunk into second childhood; but every day Judithe visited her, and watched the spark of remaining life flickering in the socket till she expired; and then one duty and one consolation were for ever gone from her daily existence.

A few months afterwards the Countess

de Bonneval fell ill; the small-pox, that fearful scourge, which was decimating Europe at that time, attacked her towards the end of the year 1718. She was laid on a bed of sickness, and death seemed at hand. She saw it approach with a steady heart and a tearless eye. A few brief sentences in the letter which she writes to her husband after her recovery speak of danger and of death with an indifference which could only have proceeded from despair of anything like earthly happiness.

She had seen it all, as she lay pale and helpless on the brink of eternity; the vanity of human joys, the delusions of human passions, even when unstained with guilt; she had abandoned in that solemn hour all the bright anticipations which had gilded the *future*, even while the *present* appeared most sad; renounced the romantic hopes of being loved as she had loved; and

resolved henceforward to accept her destiny with less of enthusiasm and more of resignation than she had hitherto done.

She had seen death face to face, and remembered at that moment that between her husband and herself there was a gulph, which till then she had refused to sound.

He had requested her never to speak to him of religion ; and when the world smiled upon them both it was not difficult to comply with this injunction, but when the realities of the next world presented themselves before her with an irresistible power, she shuddered, and doubtless felt that while for her own sake she would gladly have bowed her weary head and died, there was a thought and a fear which, at that moment, gave to death its bitterness and to the grave its sting. But these feelings, though discernible in her letter, are but slightly alluded to. We perceive only that

passion and emotion have given way to a patient devotion, which clings to its object even when her illusions have vanished. A faint touch of irony, too, marks the passage in which she speaks of what her husband's feelings would have been had he lost her; and we feel, as we read the following letter, that she has entered on a new phase of her life.

NINTH LETTER.

“You have, I know, been informed, my dear cousin, that you were a short time ago very nearly becoming a widower. I was dying of the small-pox, and, apparently, at the very point of death; but Almighty God did not choose after all to call me to Himself. He brought me awfully near to

it, however. But then, having received all the sacraments, I became quite calm, and awaited the issue with resignation. A little sooner or a little later, the end must come at last, and after all, what had I to regret? For you, that great comforter *Time* would assuredly have wrought one of its accustomed miracles, and made you soon forget that you ever had a wife. That was my persuasion, my dear cousin, and it reconciled me, I confess, to the idea of a separation, which would for ever have put an end to that hope of happiness, which, however distant it may appear, I cannot help cherishing. I did not hear till a fortnight after they came that letters from you had arrived. My father had desired them to be kept back, and I have not been able to do anything with regard to your business. My father, with whom I talk sometimes through the window, as we live near one another, has assured me that he has done everything

in his power on that subject, but I cannot find that it has been warmly taken up here. I am convinced that you will find it answer better in Germany. I trust, my dear cousin, that you will not suffer yourself to be carried away beyond your usual prudence, and that you will preserve that calmness and self-possession which in the end must always get the better of such a violent disposition as M. de Mercy's. I am well aware that you do not need my advice; but I like to tell you my opinion in the hope that it will coincide with yours, and that you will like to find that we agree. I thought to have sent my letter by the servant of the Comte des Alleurs, but the Rhingrave, the son-in-law of the Prince de Salm, came to tell me yesterday that he was going to Vienna to-morrow, and offered to take charge of it, asking me at the same time to commend him to your notice. This seems to me useless, seeing that by your

own account you have already been as civil as possible to him. My father has, however, written to you at the request of Madame la Princesse, and I promised to add my poor recommendations to their powerful ones. I commit to you, then, my dear cousin, the discharge of my debt of gratitude to the Rhingrave, inasmuch as he has afforded me the opportunity of writing to you. It is not, believe me, a small one ; if you take it upon yourself you are bound to do a great deal for him. If you do not enter into the pleasure it gives me to write to you pray do not tell me so. My attachment—my devotion to you, deserve a happier fate. I had the small-pox in my father's house. All the family had, in consequence, to leave it, and now I have in my turn removed to M. de Frémond's house, who kindly offered it to me. I must hasten to tell you that he is himself in the country. You might have been alarmed at hearing

the fact without the sequel. If your blessed indolence will allow you to write to him a note of thanks, it would be just as well, but if this bores you too much forget that I have made the suggestion."

From the day that Judithe had seen herself at the point of death she had made the resolution no longer to waste life in idle reveries, in passionate dreams, and vain hopes of happiness. Her mind, which was naturally strong, and her conscience, which had been lulled and not hardened, combined to point out another course. She resolutely returned to the religious duties which, without forsaking them, she had for a while neglected, but it was secretly, silently, without display, without seeking for sympathy or for companionship that she did so.

M. de Bonneval had told her that he

hated bigotry—the absurd name which impiety has invented for earnest religion,—and hoped never to see her classed amongst the devout ladies of Paris. She dreaded, in consequence, to draw notice on herself. She felt an insurmountable repugnance to conversations on subjects which were to her on some accounts intensely painful, and the natural reserve of her character, heightened by circumstances, grew every day more marked.

Early each morning she repaired to a neighbouring small and obscure church, and, prostrate before the altar, communed with Him who alone could understand the unspoken hopes and fears of her now resigned but deeply aching heart. No one, not even in her own home, was acquainted with the real source of that heroic patience which marked her daily life. She was never seen in fashionable churches, never at charitable meetings, seldom with devout persons ; no one knew, but one old priest and many poor sufferers and

mourners, that she went about doing good and serving God, not with the joyful homage of an undivided heart, nor with the peace of those who walk hand-in-hand with their loved ones on the narrow but straight way to heaven, but with the trembling worship of those who have to plead more than to hope, who call for mercy with the Patriarch's cry :

“ Even though He slay me, I will trust in Him.”¹

One consolation, one blessing ardently desired by her was granted to the young countess at this time. It is alluded to in one of her subsequent letters. That proud, violent, but not unfeeling woman, that broken-hearted mother, who had visited upon the deserted wife the despair to which her son's conduct had driven her, on being told one day that the object of her resentment was dying, had started as people

¹ Job xiii., 15.

do when the light is suddenly thrown on a precipice towards which they are unconsciously advancing. She had never seen her daughter-in-law since the eve of her son's departure ; scarcely mentioned her name but with dislike and violence ; but now that the word "dying" fell on her ear, it seemed to strike pity and terror into her soul.

"Judithe dying !" she murmured, and hid her face in her hands. The voice of conscience had been for some time busy within her.

The deserted wife had led a lonely and a silent existence ; the beauty, the talents which had given such fair promises of yore, were now but little talked of. Others shone in the brilliant scenes of Parisian dissipation ; others displayed their wit in the literary assemblies of the gay world, but *her* name was seldom heard beyond the walls of her father's house ; and the truth had

gradually been making its way even into the unhappy and deluded Marquise de Bonneval's mind. Then came that word "dying,"—and, oh! the long train of thought it awakened. She saw before her in that hour the little child, who, with tears on her burning cheeks, had refused to smile upon Chamillard. She felt those baby-arms clasped about her own neck, and heard once more words that were lisped in her ear that day.

"Judithe," she again murmured, and the loving, ardent girl rose before her with her bright glance of enthusiasm, her romantic passion, and her dreams of chivalry. She saw her again as she stood, pale and trembling, before her on the day when they had met for the last time, when both their hearts were breaking, and wrath had worked like madness in her own brain.¹ The un-

¹ "And to be wroth with one we love

Doth work like madness in the brain."—*Coleridge*.

happy woman mused in silence for a while, and then lifted up her voice and wept. And she arose and went straight to the deserted Hotel de Biron, whence the fear of contagion had driven all the inmates, save the one who was lying on the bed of sickness, with only one or two attendants about her.

The fell disease was at work with that slender frame, with those delicate features, and delirium had invaded the brain of the sufferer. She was not raving, but her mind was wandering, and as the stern woman bent over the unconscious form of her son's wife, she heard her lips murmur in those soft, sweet accents once so familiar to her ears:

“My dear master!”

A long kiss was pressed by burning lips on that fevered brow,—a passionate blessing uttered by a trembling voice, broken by age and grief. Long did the Marquise

de Bonneval listen to the incoherent, impassioned words which were ever and anon escaping from poor Judithe's lips; and from that day forward to the time of her own death, which was not long delayed, she loved her with the love of former years. Not at once did she show it, nor explain how and where she had abandoned for ever her resentment and her pride; but her house, her heart, and her arms were gradually opened to her daughter-in-law, whose filial tenderness soothed her remaining days.

M. de Bonneval himself was momentarily touched by the imminent peril of death which his wife had run, and he wrote to her several times to express his satisfaction at her recovery, and to exhort her to endure with more cheerfulness an inevitable separation, and not to take so much to heart the trials of life.

Strange it is, but not unfrequent, that

the very thing which we have most ardently wished for turns out in many instances more thoroughly depressing to our feelings than what we had previously deemed our severest trial. Not to hear from her husband had seemed to Judithe the hardest state of things imaginable, but now that for some weeks he had written to her regularly, she felt more deeply than she had done during months of apparent neglect that she had lived on a dream, and that her imagination could no longer furnish the materials for her heart to build on. There was no resentment, no wounded vanity in these feelings. She received his attentions with gratitude, his advice with gentleness, but coldly and hardly it struck upon her heart. She was gradually awakening to her real position; not that she saw it yet in its true light, but her present illusions were of a very different nature from those which her first

letters evinced. Discouragement, the first faint forerunner of despair, was taking possession of her soul. It reveals itself in every line of the following letter:

TENTH LETTER.

“I AM a little better, my dear cousin, and for this time, at least, I suppose that there is no more danger of my departing this world. I cannot sufficiently thank you for your regularity about writing, and am quite afraid of not expressing as warmly my gratitude now that you do write, as I did my grief at your silence. Believe me, however, when I say that my heart is always inclined to see things in the way most agreeable to its wishes, that it is open to all pleasurable impressions, and tries

to overcome those that are sad. Therefore, as nothing powerfully affects me but inasmuch as you are concerned in it, and whereas I am continually occupied with thoughts of you, I do not often allow myself to speak of the anguish I feel at our separation, for it is easier to me to be altogether silent than to talk lightly of what I feel deeply. But as you have yourself opened the question, bear with me if for once I put before you my situation. There can be few so sad. I am in one sense but little acquainted with you, but having loved you, as it were, by anticipation, my heart became yours at once, without measure or reserve. Then I lose you; and your absence is as long in proportion as the time we spent together was short. These reflections are painful, still I hope you do not altogether banish them from your mind. I would not have you dwell upon them too much, lest you should weary of

what may be to you an unwelcome subject of thought; but would they could induce you to return at last to gladden with your presence a poor ugly little wife, for such she must, alas, appear to you, if you long postpone the conclusion of her penance."

To this appeal, for doubtless it was one, no direct answer was returned, and, meanwhile, days and weeks went by; months lengthened into years, and nothing brought a change into the position of the Comte de Bonneval and of his wife. She had ceased almost to look for his return; she would have hardly said to herself that she expected it; and yet when the casual remark of a stranger—a report put about by the servants of a foreign nobleman—presented the fact to her mind in a tangible form that he had abandoned even

the vague intention of coming back to France, the pang was sharp,—sharp, as if she had not hundreds of times before owned to herself that hope was henceforward a word to her without meaning.

It was a mortal wound to Judithe that phrase so lightly said, so lightly repeated to her. She hid the arrow in her bosom, and smiled on the pain, for others had wondered at her premature gravity, at her retirement from the world.

“Was that the way,” her mother said, “to amuse a light-hearted wit like M. de Bonneval?”

“Was that the manner,” her brothers said, “of serving his interests in the busy strife of interests, and of Court favour?”

Madame de Gontaut had snatched her last letter from her bureau, and after reading it in spite of her protestations, had cried out:

“Pathetic in the extreme, my dear little Andromache, but by no means entertaining. Amuse your hero, my dear; it is your best chance. Sentiment is quite out of fashion in our days. Tell tales of Paris; send two true stories and ten false ones to Vienna. Come with me to the Hotel de Caumont, to-night. Turn two or three heads, win one or two hearts. Get a friend to put about some malicious tale against you to-morrow, and your Hector will then, perhaps, read your next letter to the end. I would not bet my old farthingale against a diamond necklace that he gets through the last.”

To extract a grain of sense out of an ounce of folly was one of Judithe's gifts,—not a slight one, seeing how much more plentiful the latter commodity is than the first. She resolved to change the tone of her letters, and in some slight measure that of her life. To keep in sight of the

world that the world might speak a word for her in the ear of her master. To please others that she might still learn how to please him better. To jest, if she can so play the bully with her own heart, on his absence. To be gay, if there can be merriment in breaking hearts. She could only try, but she succeeded indifferently.

The following is one of the letters she wrote at that time:

ELEVENTH LETTER.

“I MUST take up again the thread of my discourse, which I interrupted the other day in order to be present at the ball which the Duchesse de Berry gave to the Duchesse de Lorraine, and which she

insisted on my attending. There never was anything seen half so beautiful, and the whole magnificence of France was displayed there. People are quite delighted at having M. and Madame de Lorraine here, and all the more so because they are an exceedingly pretty little couple, and that she was very much beloved as mademoiselle.¹ M. de Lorraine goes away on the 12th, but we are to keep her a little longer. I

¹ The Duchesse de Lorraine was the Regent's sister. Her mother, Madame Charlotte Elisabeth de Bâvière gives the following account of her daughter in her letters to the Princess of Auspack: "My daughter suffers severely and never complains. She tenderly loves her husband, and I think he is touched by her gentleness and patience. She never shows any jealousy, but endures all her sorrows in silence. Her love for him is extraordinary. A single word from him puts her in spirits." No wonder that Madame de Bonneval speaks with affection of this young princess. The foregoing passage would seem to indicate a similarity in their characters.

should so like to have some amusing news to send you, but I can hear of none that would interest you. The Abbé d'Estrée, who was Archbishop of Cambray, died yesterday morning. This leaves a great appointment at the Regent's disposal. M. de Simiane is also dead, and his place of first gentleman-in-waiting to the Duke of Orleans has been given to his brother. Is there not the least chance of peace? If you are to make another campaign in Hungary, what hope is there left of seeing you next year? It is a hard struggle to give up that hope, but your will must be submitted to. The virtue of obedience, a woman's chief duty, is put to a severe test when she is forced to practise it with regard to the subject where her feelings are most deeply engaged, and concerning the object of her most ardent wishes. But where submission is at once a necessity and a duty there is nothing more to be said,

and I have resolved never to murmur against your decisions. The Duc d'Aremberg's people have been putting about here that you have given up all idea of returning to France? I have not yet seen M. and Madame de Konigsegg; she is very ill at this moment; but I have been as civil as I could to them on your account. Madame d'Aremberg is very much admired here, and her virtues are talked of even more than her beauty. She was thought to be looking lovely at the Duchess de Berry's ball. All your relations beg to be particularly mentioned to you. Your mother is a little better. My last illness has softened her exceedingly. She seemed very unhappy when she thought I was going to die. My mother embraces and loves you very much. As to my father, I will not transmit any of his messages, for we are not on very good terms together. I do not forgive his serving as the pretext for your prolonged ab-

sence. I often tell him so ; but he gets out of it as well as he can, and you are, after all, the only one with whom I ought to quarrel ; and I cannot make up my mind to do so ! You do not tell me, my dear cousin, if you have received the parcel which I sent by M. Lecomte. I should like to know if it has reached you. You are certainly not fond of answering my inquiries, but mind I do not complain of it. I know how much your time is occupied, and that if I was too exacting you would find our correspondence an intolerable burthen."

A few months later the Comte de Bonneval was appointed to the command of one of the Imperial armies destined for the war in Italy. This event he duly communicated to his wife. Judithe re-

ceived the announcement with that satisfaction which it was in her nature to feel at everything that gave him pleasure or that heightened his reputation. There never was a character so wholly devoid of selfishness as hers. Her fears for his safety, the tenderness of her affection, are all unchanged by years of neglect.

It is in the following manner that she acknowledges the receipt of his letter :

TWELFTH LETTER.

“ I HAVE just received, my dear cousin, your letter of the 23rd of last month, in which you inform me that your fate is decided, and that in a manner most glorious for you, and

most gratifying to your feelings. I congratulate you upon it, and can well conceive the pleasure which such a distinction must cause to a warrior who has been devoted to the god of battles from his very infancy; but you must excuse a woman whose heart is devoted to another worship, if she waits the issue before she can rejoice over it in quite the same spirit; her pride in your advancement must always be mingled by the fears which tenderness and timidity combine to suggest. Do not think me indifferent, however, to the high honour which is bestowed upon you. I feel it most deeply, and still more do I glory in the thought how perfectly you deserve it. Farewell. Your excellency will allow me to embrace you with as much of affection as of respect."

Eighth Chapter.

“Thou feelest that the sunflower droopeth low,
While far to other lands the sun is gone;
Thou feelest that the storm has chas'd the bow
Of hope and promise from thy dark sky flown.
Thy doom is sign'd and sealed; alone—alone—alone.”

LADY NORTHAMPTON.

“The lovely dream of life flies far away,
No self-deception can its youth renew;
But rob me not of *my* last creed and stay,
That I loved honour's self in loving you.”

DITTO.

SOON after the epoch when this letter was written Judithe's strength began to decline. In one of her father's, addressed to her husband about this time, an insignificant phrase occurs which indicates that her health has become delicate.

“Your wife,” the Marquis de Biron writes, “is pretty well to-day. To-morrow she will begin to drink asses’ milk. She has been told that you could not find time to write to her by the last courier.”

Aye, that was in truth the slow but sure poison that was beginning to tell on the languid frame, the pallid cheek, the waning strength! Hope deferred, sickening delays, endless disappointments! To be always waiting, always looking forward, still framing visions for the future, calmer, more rational, more moderate in their scope, than those that have just been abandoned as hopeless, and to see these vanish in their turn as the fanciful patterns that the frost stamps upon glass. To give up love in its impassioned sense, and in its stead to nurse a patient devotion. To dream of friendship as love was dreamed of before, and then to see the links of both gradually

giving way, every tie loosened, every illusion disappearing. All this sears the heart, or else shortens the existence of those who have to endure it.

The first year of her husband's absence Judithe wept over the thought that three weeks had elapsed without bringing her a letter from him; in the month of September of the second year she had been five months without hearing from him, and her only consolation remains in the fact that on important occasions he writes to her, and yet long afterwards she was keenly sensible to every little slight, to every little nameless trial of that description which selfish carelessness is ever inflicting on sore and bruised hearts.

If M. de Gontaut tells her one day that he has a commission to execute for his brother-in-law, Judithe covets the privilege with a sort of passionate regret that she has not been entrusted with the task. It

would have been an event in her life to purchase something for him, to call to mind his tastes, so as to please his fancy in the selection of the required trinket. Why is she whose life is so shorn of pleasures and interests to be denied this trifling gratification. Such little things, when connected with him, sometimes serve for a moment to cheer her drooping spirits. For instance, when the Austrian Ambassador invites himself to dinner with her father, she gets quite animated at the thought that he will talk with her of the General of the Imperial Army, that he will praise him, that his prospects and his merits will form the subject of conversation. And on that, to her, eventful day, for once she dressed with care, for once she tried to please, for once she listened with satisfaction to the somewhat uncharitable remarks that were made on certain personages of the society at Vienna,

for those thus reflected upon were inimical to the Comte de Bonneval, and she had not outlived the susceptibility which made her fly like an angry dove at those who injured or attacked the cherished idol of her heart.

Traces of these conflicting sentiments are visible in a long letter which she addresses to M. de Bonneval a few days before the visit of the Austrian Ambassador :

THIRTEENTH LETTER.

“I HAD not intended to write to you to-day, my dear cousin, afraid that my *empressement*, might in the end become oppressive, but my father told me he was preparing a letter for you, and I

could not resist the wish of adding a few words to it. I am sure you cannot disapprove the feelings that possess me. Are they not the natural results of the tender affection I feel for you? and do they not master my heart, and govern all my actions? I was so glad to see by your last letter that you were not displeased at my reproaches, and at my complaints of your silence. So happy that although you say you are not to blame, you do not blame me either. I could not have wished for anything better, for, if obliged to think that one or the other of us had been in the wrong, I had a thousand times rather have accused myself of being too sensitive than you of being indifferent. I am not afraid to own that I am influenced by the most devoted tenderness and at the same time by a timid fear of not meeting with a return. This last feeling is one that you can never have experienced, and so can with

difficulty allow for. I therefore promise never to give way to it when it could lead to my displeasing you. I cannot but be glad that even by such little playful attacks as you allude to, people put you in mind of me. I hope that you will not copy the examples of a great prince who only when at the head of an army should be taken as an example; for while fame spreads abroad the report of his great deeds, it whispers also that the hero is not free from weaknesses, and, indeed, that he is not fastidious as regards the objects of his attentions. I do not choose out of a little private feeling of animosity towards our friend to cry down the attractions of a person I have never seen,¹ but I am told that without injustice this might be done. The Austrian Ambassador has sent to my father to invite himself to dinner. He had

¹ The Comtesse Bathiany, Prince Eugene's mistress.

begged him to be on that footing with him. I hope to drink with him to your health, and, notwithstanding all my resentment, to Prince Eugene's also, should he propose it. My father forgot to ask you in his letter if he can send by the post the snuff-box you wish to have. He can answer for its safety as far as Strasbourg, but does not know how this would be in your dear Germany. Let him know about it soon. You would not trust me with that commission? You think me, I suppose, very ignorant about matters of taste, and you are quite right,—I admit it. But M. de Gontaut, who has been the person employed in this matter, would not have refused me his assistance. I am not angry that you wrote to my father, only remember another time that there is a person in Paris whose dear master you are, one who is jealous of receiving your commands, and who is bound to you by the tenderest ties that ever ex-

isted. I think I ought to tell you that M. le Duc de Brancas complains of you. I just mention it that you may write to him if you judge it to be expedient. M. de Lauzun says he will be very angry if in all my letters I do not transmit to you his compliments. I have not heard from you since the 16th of May, but I do not complain of it. I shall never forget that at the most interesting moment of your life you wrote to me."

Three whole years have passed away. Many a change has taken place in the hearts, in the minds, in the destinies of men. Time has laid its mark on many a face, and the world has witnessed many a stirring event, many a political catastrophe.

France had been agitated by plots, by insurrections, by numerous arrests. The

disasters consequent on excessive speculation had ruined whole families, and caused fortune after fortune to vanish into thin air. The thirst for gold—that baleful fever of nations advanced in civilisation—had seized on the French people, and an intemperate eagerness for material enjoyments had begun to penetrate into the masses. The most unbounded luxury prevailed in Paris, and was gradually extending itself to the provinces. A fearful pestilence at the same time was raging at Marseilles. Heroic virtues, as is always the case in France, stood in contrast with increasing profligacy, but crime was rampant in its palaces, and making its way into its cottages and its workshops. Debauchery was gaining ground in all the ranks of society, and the vile eighteenth century was audaciously raising its impious standard over the ruin of morals and the sufferings of humanity.

Where do we find at the end of those years the daughter of the Duc de Biron, the forsaken wife of the Comte de Bonneval? In the midst of that corrupt society—of those scenes of dissipation, sin, and death, which every great capital presents; of that turmoil of angry passions, of hatred, speculation, intrigue, and violence—she lived as pure, as undefiled, as solitary, as the lily that floats on a rank and foetid pool.

Never have her eyes looked again upon her husband. Never has she breathed a single word of complaint against the doom that he has assigned to her. And yet it is no longer on the field of battle, amidst the dangers and the glories of war that he lingers far from her. No, he is at Vienna, the gaiest, the freest, apparently the most prosperous of men. Beloved for his engaging qualities, the idol of a set of friends, whom he captivates by his wit and his amiability—by hangers-on, whom he

attracts by his reckless prodigality. He drinks, he sings, he jests, as much as ever; quarrels with Prince Eugene, and turns the Emperor into ridicule; risks for a *bon mot* the loss of his position; and never gives a thought to the wife whose heart is slowly breaking, whose life is dwindling away in silence and obscurity. The world looks upon him with favour, for fortune is at present smiling upon him. She is almost forgotten, for those who live out of the sphere of men's interests and passions do not long remain in their minds. Her heart is unchanged, but she has at last understood her destiny, and with the obstinacy of an unconquerable attachment persists, sad and strange as it is, in preferring it to a happier, but more commonplace lot.

Now and then, at lengthened intervals, when any particular occasion gives her a pretext for it, she still writes to M. de

Bonneval; but she has ceased her entreaties that he will answer her letters or return to Paris. She admirably unites in her character the dignity of a forsaken woman, and the persevering tenderness of a devoted wife. She cares for nothing but his interests; and at the time that we are speaking of, begins to foresee, with all the tact that affection inspires, the dangers of the course he is entering upon, the fearful risks he is running and the miseries that await him.

For once a sentence escapes her which might be supposed to imply a reproach, but it is instantaneously retracted, and she expresses, on the contrary, a touching acquiescence in her fate, almost a pride in it (if anything so gentle can be called pride), which inspires more sympathy than the bitterest lamentations.

No contrast can be more striking than that which exists between her first letter

to her husband, written on the 18th of May, 1817, and the last of those which have been preserved to us, bearing the date of the 8th of November, 1721. In the former we find the outpourings of a young heart for the first time made acquainted with suffering. In the last the final term which sorrow arrives at, after passing through all the weary stages of its long course.

“When many a day has come and gone,
When grief is calm, and hope is dead.”

FOURTEENTH LETTER.

“I AM very grateful to you, my dear cousin, for having thought of writing to tell me of the privilege which the Emperor has

granted to you with regard to the establishment of your steel manufactures. By this means I had the delight of hearing from you. A long time had elapsed since I had the happiness of receiving one of your letters. I could not but conclude that you had quite left off caring for me, which, indeed, would not be extraordinary after so long an absence following upon so short an acquaintance. All I can say is that I shall never deserve to be forgotten. I have been very unhappy at the reports which have been put about regarding your quarrel with Prince Eugene, but as you did not speak of it I did not venture to write to you on that subject. I believe that we cannot have more dangerous enemies than our friends when they turn against us. I am, of course, persuaded that you have not been in the wrong in the first instance, but I must confess that I should ardently desire to

see you reconciled to him, certain as I am that you will never be capable of any meanness to that end, which would be worse than any disgrace. I do wish with all my heart that you may obtain what you desire, but I have no confidence in it. I feel as if the very fact of my wishing it was an obstacle in the way, and that my unhappy destiny would prevail over your more fortunate one. Do not, however, think, my dear cousin, when I say this that I am disposed to envy the fate of others. My sisters, for instance,—I think them all very happily married; but when one happens to bear certain names, and has the sense to feel that distinction, it is natural to be patient as to the inevitable drawbacks that attend such a destiny. I have never supposed that your position would remain what it is at present. I trust that, sooner or later, your services will be suitably rewarded, and believe me

when I add that it is quite on your account, and not on mine, that I earnestly desire to see justice done to you. As to me, nothing can be more simple than my views. In a very short time I became sincerely attached to you. This affection has been to me the source of an endless sorrow; but no trials can obliterate a feeling which will always make me consider your friendship as the only thing on earth that can make me happy."

Alas! for her, poor Judithe; and is the love, the friendship of that worthless man indeed the *only* thing on earth that can make her happy? It is those stipulations with Providence, those self-willed selections of particular blessings, which are usually visited not, perhaps, with ultimate severity by a merciful God, but almost always by bitter disappointments and trials. We may

not choose for ourselves, or even “will at all cost to be happy,”¹ as Madame de Stael expresses it.

From her very infancy Madame de Bonneval had chosen her destiny, and when it had been granted to her to tread the path she had marked out, she braved, as it were, every pang that met her on the way, and made herself a staff of every broken reed that she could lean on. Amidst the singular and mournful circumstances of her lot, she clung to the thought that it had been given to her to be the wife of a hero; she could bear everything with courage,—absence, neglect, and unkindness,—as long as she felt proud of him whose name she bore, and exulted in the consciousness that the object of her love was worthy of that devoted homage which she paid him.

¹ “Vouloir à toute force du bonheur.”—*Corinne*.

Her eyes refused to see, and her heart to believe, what others saw, what others knew. When the light of his fame began to wane she watched it with trembling anxiety, and followed with a beating heart the downward course of his career.

Imprudence after imprudence, folly after folly, marked each succeeding year of M. de Bonneval's life. He finally got entangled in difficulties, into which an absurd piece of Quixotism had led him;¹ threatened the

¹ The Marquise de Prié, wife of the Governor of Brussels, and her daughter, one evening before a numerous society, and in the presence of the Comte de Bonneval, made disrespectful comments on the conduct of the Queen of Spain, the young Elisabeth de Valois. Bonneval, who prided himself on being allied in the female line to the Bourbons, chose to take up the cause of this royal lady with so much violence, and spread about Brussels letters so insulting to the Governor and his family, that the Marquis de Prié ordered him to be arrested. So beloved was Bonneval by

Emperor of Austria as he had once threatened the King of France; called out Prince Eugene, and insulted him because he declined to accept his challenge; went from prison to prison; and finally abandoned his adopted as he had formerly done his native country. He escaped to Venice, his former place of refuge after his dispute with Chamillart; thence he was driven by the influence of Austria, and took up his abode in an obscure Turkish village.

his regiment, and so popular with the people, that according to the Prince de Ligne, an insurrection was with difficulty repressed, and chiefly by means of the French General's own efforts. Prince Eugene having taken part against him, and approved of the sentence of a court-martial, which condemned him to a year's imprisonment, he took occasion during the course of the affair to send a challenge to the Prince, and protest that if he did not fight him he would stand disgraced in the eyes of Europe. This led to a second imprisonment in Austria, and finally to his desertion of that country, and his retreat into Turkey.

It was at that time that his wife wrote to a common friend the following letters. She had through him received news of her exiled husband, over whose fate a mystery had for some time rested. Her heart is full of pity for his misfortunes, of sympathy with his trials. With a true woman's spirit she adopts his enmities, and espouses his friendships. His struggles, his exile, his wrongs, his revenge, are rousing to the utmost the inextinguishable love and pity of her nature. But she is bearing her burthen alone. No one speaks to her now of the hero of Belgrade. No flattering expressions attend the mention of his name. No compliments are conveyed to him through the medium of her ready pen. A silence deep as death has succeeded to the voice of renown. Indignantly she feels that all are altered towards him; that her own family, and his friends even, change the subject if, with a flushed cheek and a throbbing

heart, she speaks of her husband. Have his calamities hardened every heart against him? Is there no justice, no generosity left in this vile world? Oh, how her woman's heart scorns the mean desertion of one whom fortune persecutes; with what renewed zeal she vows that never will her patient and devoted love cease to yearn after his welfare, and mourn over his trials. Nothing shall ever drive him from her heart, or make her blush for her "dear master."

Alas! for human vows! Alas! for those who think they have drunk to the dregs the cup of woe! An idol deeply enshrined in a human heart can only be overthrown by fearful strokes.

As she sat down to write these two letters, she alone in Paris was ignorant of a fact that would have blanched her cheek, and turned to gall the sweet fountains of memory and hope:

FIFTEENTH LETTER.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“I was delighted to receive your letter. You know what a state I was in when you left me. The reports concerning M. de Bonneval which the Germans have sedulously put about, have made upon me an impression which I cannot attempt to disguise. His misfortunes have always been as keenly linked with my feelings as with my fate. I cannot fathom the inconstancy of men. I have all the timidity of my sex. I try to struggle against the fears which result from it, and I passionately wish that he may find in the new mode of life which his enemies have forced upon

him at least some tranquility. I hear people talk of the success of the Ottoman armies as favourable to France. I can quite understand it should be so, but it is not that I care about. I confess that I am concerned with nothing but the Emperor's ingratitude, and my ardent desire that he may be punished for wronging a man who has done him such good service, and so often shed his blood for him. This feeling is wicked, perhaps,—I try to repress it; but the Grand Signior's successes make me feel how far I am from being perfect. It is very difficult to put down in oneself these emotions. Nature has so much power over us. I have always coveted M. de Bonneval's regard beyond any other blessing. A most singular destiny has deprived me of all but that one hope. The remainder of my life will be employed in trying to deserve his esteem; I trust that his thoughts of me during my life or after

my death will be such as shall not wound the tenderness of my feelings. My health, dear sir, has been for years in a deplorable condition. The system I follow has relieved me a little, but if I relax from it in the least degree I instantly sink again into that languor in which you found me. I am assured, however, that my lungs are not yet affected to any considerable extent, and that I am not in immediate danger. It gave me great pleasure to know that you were able to inform M. de Bonneval of the state of his affairs when I was so anxious that he should be made acquainted with it; I had in view the justification of my conduct at the time he was in Venice. He is well aware of his brother's character, who never thinks of anyone but himself. Do tell M. de Bonneval all my earnest wishes for his happiness. The last battle has dismayed the Imperialists, and you may depend upon

it that it is the report of his presence in the Turkish armies that has terrified the Austrian troops. The Prince of Lichtenstein, their ambassador here, assures everybody that there is no truth in it. You need not go far to discover the reasons of the union between the Emperor of Austria and the Empress of Russia. Those two powers have joined together against everybody else, and in particular against the Grand Signior, in order each to aggrandize their own dominions, and if once they should beat the Turks, most likely they would fall out amongst themselves. I should imagine that the plans of the allies are very much deranged at present, and that Her Majesty of Russia would be glad by this time not to have intervened in the quarrel. I will let you know everything that I may be able to find out. My own opinions are of course perfectly insignificant. I know and hear nothing. My comments,

too, are useless, but I will try to make up for my ignorance by questioning my friends. It will surprise people, for I have long given up the world, and left off going to Court, and I am often in consequence in the most complete ignorance of what is taking place around me. Believe me, dear sir, that I shall be most happy to give you any proof of my esteem. I conceived a most sincere regard for you at the time when we so frequently met. Pray write to me often, and everything you can find out about M. de Bonneval. There are continual *fêtes* here just now for the marriage of Madame de France with the Infant Don Philip. I believe that in a few days I shall be the only person almost in Paris. I have no regret for what young persons call *pleasures*. I have given up everything for the sake of a life of retirement. Tranquility is my only ambition,—not a very aspiring one.”

A short time afterwards Judithe wrote as follows to the same person :

SIXTEENTH LETTER.

“THE details you give me, my dear sir, of the situation in which M. de Bonneval found himself, did not surprise me. I felt certain that it must have been a desperate position of affairs which had determined his course ; and though I was not acquainted with all the particulars, some instances of the Emperor’s persecutions had been related in this country. The account you give me is most deeply affecting. The hardest hearts could not hear of it unmoved. If his merits had been less eminent, his fate might have been happier. You know me well enough to guess what I felt in reading a history in

itself so intensely interesting. All that you tell me had been misrepresented here, and many facts altogether omitted. The French Ambassador has said very little indeed, I believe, about M. de Bonneval. At least nothing that he mentioned had given me a correct idea of his position. People do not seem to know here with any certainty whether he is with the army. The manner in which the Turks have lately manœuvred led to that inference, and the discipline with which they fought at the Battle of Krotzha was so different from their usual habits that it confirms the supposition. It is supposed here that the Emperor's army is destroyed, and that the surrender of Belgrade will oblige him to sue for peace on whatever terms the Grand Signior may insist upon. The ministers are very prudent and say nothing of the Austrian disasters, but the French are in general delighted. There is a universal feeling of rejoicing on the subject. Some people say that this is even

evident at Court, much as it is sought to hide it. Pray let me know, if you can, where exactly M. de Bonneval is staying, and how is his health. I cannot but be deeply interested in all the events of his life. I have certainly never had to reproach myself with indifference towards him; my affection will be as constant to the end of my life as it has hitherto been. Nobody seems to conjecture what the Prussians are about to do. It is a strange thing how little is known of what goes on in that country. It had been said that General Munich had beaten the Turks, but as the report has not been confirmed, doubts exist on the subject, and we hear that the Russians are very much alarmed about the movements of Sweden,—that there is quite a panic in the empire. For some time past the Russian Court has been very uneasy. If the Swedes chose to take advantage of this moment I really believe

they might wreak vengeance on that power for all the injustice with which it has treated them. War is at last declared between England and Spain. The ambassadors have mutually withdrawn without taking leave. Both have been recalled. It is a serious beginning, and may lead to important consequences, especially if, as is supposed, the Dutch join the English. A short time will decide that question. I am very much surprised that we have not heard of the taking of Belgrade. It almost makes me afraid that some misfortune has befallen the besiegers. We must beware, however, of precipitate judgments. The Germans interrupt all the letters, and it is only a long time afterwards that we are acquainted with their mischances. We should not have to wait so long for news of their successes. I do not know a more conceited nation than the Austrians. I am sure, my dear sir,

that you must have acquainted M. de Bonneval with the present situation of my family, and that the Comte de Biron, whom he knew as a child, is now the head of our house, at least the one who bears its titles, the abbé being engaged in a profession which does not allow him to marry. He is, however, the eldest son, and the dukedom descends to him by right, but he has yielded it to the Comte de Biron, who, I suppose, will very soon be married. He appeared the other day at the head of the King's Regiment at Compiégne, and he was very much commended. That regiment has never been in so good a state. I think the family will have every reason to be proud of its young head. I remember that M. de Bonneval used to be very fond of him, and thought him very promising. The youngest of my brothers, with whom you are acquainted, the Marquis de Gontaut, is now colonel of the Regiment of

Biron. He has just inherited from M. d'Urfé, who has left him all his fortune. It is nothing very considerable, but to a poor younger son it is, nevertheless, a matter of consequence, and I ought to be the more glad at his good fortune that when his means were extremely limited he made me a sharer in everything he possessed. I often refused to take advantage of his friendship, but a more earnest and devoted attachment could not often be met with even in a brother. I am sure M. de Bonneval will not be sorry to hear these details. I used to observe during the short time I had the opportunity of studying his character that what was generous and feeling always made an impression upon him. *He* has certainly himself experienced the bitterest effects of ingratitude. Prince Lichtenstein, the Austrian Ambassador here, did everything in his power when he arrived to obtain that I should see him. I never

would consent to hold the slightest intercourse with him. It would have, indeed, seemed to me quite indecent that the minister of a sovereign who has behaved so ill to my husband should be in any sort of communication with me. He visits my mother, and one day I was in her room when he came in, but he had not the least guess then or afterwards who I was, and as I never go into society or to any public places of amusement I can easily keep out of his way. I have just heard that the English have taken and sold by auction two French vessels. It is expected that the King will be offended, as well he may be, at this proceeding, and that it will enable the Queen of Spain to persuade him to join in the war. Not long ago a Spaniard said here that the Queen of Spain had not been informed at the time of the correspondence between M. de Bonneval and M. de Patigno, and that she seemed

sorry at having been kept in ignorance of it. It was not the first time that I had heard that the minister had been afraid of the superiority of M. de Bonneval's genius. At most Courts it seems an object to keep away the very persons who would be capable of giving useful advice, and that to possess an understanding superior to the generality of men is a positive disadvantage. I assure you that there is a general desire here that the Turks may prove to Europe that it does not answer to drive certain men to despair. I reckon, my dear sir, on your letting me know everything that regards M. de Bonneval. I assure you that I shall be deeply grateful to you for this kindness. I have never ventured to confide in anyone, fearing always to expose him to danger, and seeing perils on every side. Your nephew is gone to Geneva. He came to take leave of me. I am afraid

I shall never have an opportunity of being of use to him. The happiness of contributing to the happiness of others is not often given to persons in my position."

Ninth Chapter.

“Where art thou, glorious stranger? thou
So loved, so lost, where art thou now?
Apostate, infidel, whate’er
Th’ unhallowed name thou’rt doomed to bear!”

MOORE.

“And how felt he, the wretched man
Reclining there, while memory ran
O’er many a year of guilt and strife,
Flew o’er the dark flood of his life,
Nor found one sunny resting place,
Nor brought him back one branch of grace.
 Each nobler aim
And hope and feeling which had slept
From boyhood’s hour, that instant came
Fresh o’er him, and he wept! He wept!”

DITTO.

“Dare I when mountains of my sins
O’erwhelm me, at my last gasp
Ask for mercy?”

MASSINGER.

WHEN Madame de Bonneval had written
the letter with which the last chapter closes

her cup of sorrow was doubtless full, full to the very brim, but it had not yet turned to gall.

In the midst of his trials, of his disgrace, of his outcast and wretched existence, she still looked upon her husband as a hero persecuted by fortune and by ungrateful men, but dearer to her heart as an obscure exile in a nameless Turkish village, than when in high favour at the Imperial Court, he was basking in the sunshine of prosperity. His misfortunes had rekindled in her heart all the ardour of her affection, and many a romantic dream had revived in our poor Judithe's heart of joining him in his exile, of ministering to him in his sorrows; and every day she prayed that a little strength might be restored to her feeble frame wherewith to carry out this cherished project. She thought of it by day, she dreamt of it by night; and some time after she had written

the letter that has just been read, she resolved to set about its accomplishment. She had resolved by the aid of her favourite brother secretly to leave Paris, and to make her way to the country where her husband had sought refuge. Difficulties there would be, but could not the love that was so strong within her carry her through every obstacle? Never had she dreamed of forcing herself on M. de Bonneval when at the Court of Vienna or in the midst of the luxury of Brussels he had been living in splendour and in gaiety; but now, surely, the sight of her face, the sound of her voice, would be soothing to him amidst the strange scenes and the new companions whom adversity had forced upon him. She would speak to him of home and of France; and some day, perhaps, when his heart was softened, she would remind him, yes, she might find courage to remind him of prayers said in infancy, of the day of his

first communion, of hopes beyond the grave ; now that the world was frowning upon him, friends forsaking the exiled hero, and enemies striving to slander his fair fame, she would stand once more by his side, and shield and cheer him with that love which was tenacious as life, and stronger than death.

Oh, obstinate dreamer ! Deluded heart ! will nothing open your eyes, nothing subdue the deep-seated idolatry of your life-long passion ? Never in her youthful days of romance and enthusiasm had she nursed a vision with so much ardour as she now did this last dream of her existence. Never counted the moments with such keen impatience as now when watching for her beloved brother's visit, on whose aid she reckoned, on whose co-operation and secrecy she relied. It was in the garden of the Hotel de Biron, under the horse-chesnut tree, where, as a child, she used to talk

with her nurse of her soldier-cousin, that she sat expecting the young Armand de Gontaut. He came and seated himself by her side. The wind was rustling in the branches over their heads; she heard only, or felt as if she heard, the beating of her own heart.

“Armand,” she said at last, “you have often grieved for me; you have ever been my best friend. Now I call upon you to help me.”

“In what way, dearest Judithe? My time, my purse, my life are at your disposal.”

He gazed upon her wan cheek, her eyes dimmed by sickness and grief, but sparkling now with feverish light, and his own were filled with tears.

“I do not often mention *him* now,” she said, with a tremulous voice. “Even you, Armand, turn coldly away when I name him; but the day is come when I

can no longer linger here. Duty, affection, love—oh, yes, love unconquerable, irresistible, undying—urges me to his side. He is in sorrow, in exile, in solitude. I must go to him, I must see him again. You must help me. Let me go to him, Armand, or I die.”

With clasped hands and an expression of passionate entreaty she awaited his answer as if life and death hung on his next words.

A deep flush rose in the young de Gontaut's cheek, then he turned pale, and let his head drop on his hands. There was a sorrowful and stern expression in his countenance when he looked up again.

“You must know it sooner or later, Judithe. It is vain to try and keep it from you. You *must* hear the truth.”

“He is dead!” she ejaculated, in a broken voice.

“Would to God he were dead!” wildly exclaimed the young man. “Would to God he had never been born, the apostate, the renegade! The destroyer of your peace, of your life!”

“What did you say, Armand?” Judithe asked, with unnatural calmness. “What names did you give *my husband*?”

“Do not call him by that name. Do not so dishonour yourself and us. The Comte de Bonneval has abjured the faith of a Christian, the honour of a gentleman; he has saved his life, retrieved his ruined fortunes, but he is now the follower of Mahomet,—a turbaned renegade, a vile apostate. He has trod under foot the Cross, he has denied his God; and in splendour and luxury doubtless revels at this hour in the joys of a harem.”

“Is this true?” Judithe calmly inquired.

“True! alas, as that I stand by your

side at this moment, my poor unhappy sister."

"I have nothing more to say, Armand. Thank you, dear brother, for all your kindness. I would be alone now."

She was alone ; for the first time, perhaps, in her life she felt alone with God. The veil had fallen from her eyes. The last illusion was dispelled. A mighty anguish was upon her. She walked to the garden-gate like a person who dreams. She passed through it, and went on to a neighbouring church as if propelled by instinct rather than by volition. There she sank on her knees. There she surrendered the past with its memories, there she laid the present with its agony, the future with its terrors, at the feet of God, who had at last broken to pieces the idol that had so long stood between Him and her soul. He alone heard the cry of a heart wounded to death.

She never in any human ears pronounced

again the Comte de Bonneval's name. She buried in the grave of an eternal silence every remembrance of him. His picture, his books, his letters, were for ever banished from her sight. But on her knees every day, in her thoughts every hour, during the years of slow decline which ended in her death, a sacrifice of intercession was offered up at the mercy seat of Heaven. There she laid her tears, her sufferings, the slow decay of earthly hope, the vanished dreams of life,—her saddened youth, her languishing existence, and that last and most bitter of all trials, the blight which had fallen on long-cherished memories. Perhaps she founded a hope, perhaps gathered a consolation from the very excess of her woe.

The prayer of a suffering heart has a strange power for winning at the hands of God the greatest boon He can bestow,—the conversion of a soul hovering on the

brink of eternity, that can give no exterior sign of repentance, that can only send up a last mute appeal for mercy to Him who alone can hear, and can answer that cry.

It might be that her life had proved one long tissue of trials; that she had seen every blessing pass away from it, and herself descending into an early grave, only to give strength to her pleadings for one who never pleaded for himself.

Once again, in the course of her remaining years, the Countess de Bonneval received a message from the man whom she had so faithfully, so tenderly loved. He sent her an earnest entreaty that she would write to him a few lines, and she complied with his request. He received that letter, but no one ever saw it, no one ever knew what it contained. When he died it was not found with the others amongst his papers; perhaps he destroyed it to stifle an uneasy

feeling of remorse; perhaps he wore it next his heart, and that it was buried with him in his Turkish grave.

In the most reckless of reckless men, in the boldest and most daring offenders against God and man, there lingers a faint reminiscence of bygone days, which can still be appealed to, and not always in vain. Long after his wife's death, under the dazzling splendour of an eastern sky, in one of the most sumptuous villas of the Bosphorus, Achmet Pasha Comte de Bonneval, in the midst of the luxury of a wholly material existence, had apparently sunk in oblivion all recollection of God, whom he had denied, of the country he had forsaken. He treated religion and feeling alike with derision. He scoffed at Christianity, and sneered at virtue. The maxim of his youth was the motto of his old age :

“Jouissons du présent,
L'avenir est aux fous.”

No traces of remorse, of regret, or of despondency were visible in his countenance, or betrayed in his conversation. Gay and witty as ever, time had wrought no change in the licentiousness of his habits, or the indomitable levity of his spirits. And yet, his biographer relates¹ that on one single occasion that insensibility gave way to irresistible emotion,—that for once the apostate whom nothing seemed ever to subdue or touch was moved even to tears.

At a dinner given to him by one of his European acquaintances, at Constantinople, an Italian artist, who made one of the party,

¹ The Chevalier de Maya invited the Comte de Bonneval to dinner with an Italian singer. Great was the surprise of those who knew his habitual gaiety to see him burst into tears when she began to sing. He gave no reason for his emotion, but it was supposed that the air or the words of that song had brought with them recollections which formed a painful contrast with his actual position.
—*Memoirs of the Prince de Ligne.*

was requested to sing. When she began one of the melodies of her own land, great was the astonishment of the company to see the Comte de Bonneval burst into tears. The exile, the renegade, "lifted up his voice and wept." Too sad even for his blunted sensibility, too bitter for his indifference, were the recollections which that air, which those words awakened. They thrilled to the bottom of his hardened heart, which had withstood so many appeals, and broken so many ties; it sounded in his ears like a voice from an early-closed grave,—that melody which had lulled him to repose on the eve of his separation from the young wife who had so tenderly loved him. Doubtless in that hour, when the splendour of the east was spread before his eyes, when the goblet was going round, and foreign faces were laughing in drunken mirth around him, there rose in his sight a vision

sweet and sorrowful of a room darkening in the twilight, and a gentle form bending over him with matchless tenderness. In his ears sounded once more whispered words of innocent affection,—he felt on his burning brow the pressure of a soft hand. A long-remembered melody stole again over his senses like a breeze from the far west, laden with the perfumes of his own native land. No wonder, then, that the flood-gates gave way, that the proud man wept.

Judithe de Gontaut, the wronged, the patient, the broken-hearted wife of the Comte de Bonneval, did not long survive the destruction of her last hopes, the ruin of her last illusions. She was scarcely more than forty years of age when she died in her father's house, that old Hotel de Biron,—where she had played as a child, dreamed as a young girl, loved and sorrowed as a woman. She had given a

corrupt and frivolous society a touching example of conjugal affection, patient endurance, and unfailing constancy. The perfume of her unostentatious virtues pervaded her home. It is difficult even now to think of her story without emotion.

Death came at last as a friend to her who had nothing to hope for on earth.

If, in the latter days of his troubled existence, the Comte de Bonneval turned his eyes, as his biographer relates,¹ to-

¹ At seventy years of age the Comte de Bonneval wrote as follows to his brother:

"I am often almost beside myself through wearisome reflections. Constant attacks of gout and many other infirmities oblige me to seek your advice, as the head of our family, as to the course I had better take."

The marquis answered him this time in the kindest manner:

"If you were driven to the course you adopted, you are now free to change it. Remember that we have both of us but a short time to live. I will send you all the money you may wish for."

wards the home of Christians, the refuge of penitents and of mourners, towards Rome, that blessed asylum whence none are driven, where none are rejected, who fly to her maternal bosom, even though it be at the eleventh hour; if in his extremity he had recourse to the Vicar of Christ, thus preparing the way for his return to the church; if, when forestalled in these projects by the imperious grasp of death, the apostate upon his dying couch, beset as it was by infidels and unbelievers, cried to God for pardon, and by a miracle of grace obtained it at

Bonneval applied to the Neapolitan Court for aid to escape from Turkey. It was arranged that a Sicilian frigate should cruize in the Archipelago, the count go on board of her, and straightway proceed to Rome, where the Pope had encouraged him to come; and the King of Naples promised to provide for him. But a sudden attack of illness put an end to these projects, and this celebrated man died at Constantinople, on the 23rd of March, 1747.—*Memoirs of the Prince de Ligne.*

that last moment, doubtless it was that she who had loved, suffered, and wept upon earth was pleading for him *there* where

“Those who mourn shall be comforted.”
Where “The wicked cease from troubling,
and the wearied with their own strength
are at rest.”

THE END.

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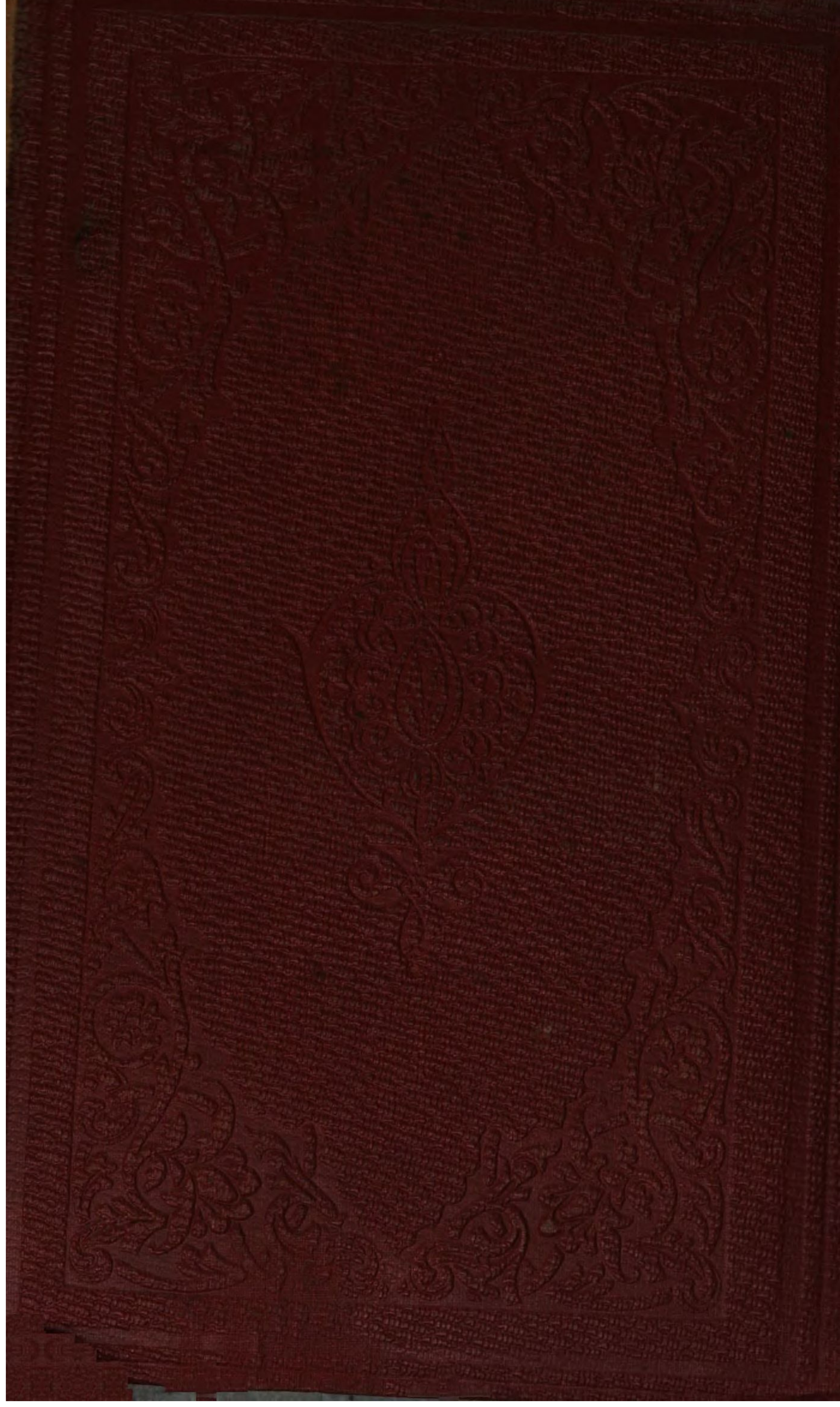
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